

# HAFFEEZ

POET SON OF INDIA

*by*

ANELÁ















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**MAJLIS - I - URDU**  
**MODEL TOWN, LAHORE**



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*To*  
*The Spirit of Poetry*  
*which transcends the barriers of race,*  
*country, and colour*









## A WORD TO THE READER

**M**ALIK-U-SHUARA, Hassan-ul-Mulk Bahadur, Firdausi-i-Islam, Abul Asar Hafeez Jallandhari, titled 'King of poets,' to-day dominates the field of Urdu Poetry.

Dark, bony, thin, soft-hearted and short-tempered, bald-headed, long-faced with two deep-seated sparkling eyes, forty-three years old, and boyish in manners, exceedingly sensitive and emotional, Hafeez symbolises 5 feet 5 inches of poetic greatness.

The fertile land of India has for centuries been producing most distinguished personalities who have held positions envied in all lands and in all spheres of life : Art, Poetry Philosophy, Architecture, Astronomy and the Fine Arts, all have thrown up their men of genius.

In the field of Urdu literature Wali, Sauda, Mir Taqi, Anis and Ghalib all have held the torch in turn and enriched the Urdu language. And down to the present age, Hali



and Iqbal have achieved fame for their dynamic thoughts and sweet poetic expressions.

This country has been the mingling pot of different cultures and civilizations, but in spite of it all even to-day one thing remains crystal clear that the Indian touch in the serenity of language and the melodious way of expression is a factor common to all the poets of note, irrespective of their caste, and creed.

In this book I am introducing Hafeez to the English-speaking peoples of the West as well of the East, for to-day he is captivating the hearts of the Indians—young and old, Hindus and Muslims alike. The medium in which he writes is the mother tongue of millions of men.

The collection of facts and materials for this biography was by no means an easy task. The difficulties of language, insuperable as they seemed to start with, were got over by the help of friends who admired Hafeez and his work. I must thank Sir Abdul Qadir and Mr. Riaz Qadir for some very able translations and also Syed Nazeer

Niyazi and Pandit Hari Chand Akhtar who enriched my collection of materials by relating personal anecdotes, for which I am grateful to them.

ANELÁ

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## CHAPTER I

### AT DAYBREAK

**I**N the old important city of Jullundur, in the Punjab, there is a graveyard that once was the battlefield of Alexander the Great. During the reign of the Muslim Emperors around the city were situated, twelve villages each ruled by a Pathan chief. These chiefs were great warriors, self-esteemed and dignified. This often led them to war with each other.

On the decay of the Muslim rule in India, towards the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Punjab came under the sway of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It was during the reign of this Maharaja that the twelve chiefs lost their power and were left only as landowners. The industry, then, in Jullundur was wood-carving and lock-manufacturing. This was in the hands of the Muslims, while the Hindus had their full control over the



whole trade.

It was in the vicinity of this ancient graveyard in this historic town that there lived a God-fearing old man who went to Mecca on a pilgrimage, where he died, finding eternal rest in the holy land of Islam. He left behind three sons to earn their own living. His son Mehr-ud-Din with his two brothers built up a flourishing business by supplying the troops with firearms, uniforms and food-stuffs, but since the Punjab was politically unsettled, it did not prove very prosperous to them. They were the victims of local intrigue and ceased to enjoy the patronage of the then ruling family. And their trade declined rapidly.

The family originally being Hindu Rajputs and converted to Islam had to undergo many hardships financially but nevertheless managed to keep their belongings intact.

After some years, the Maharaja died, the Sikh kingdom perished in the flames of anarchy, and the British conquered the Punjab. Mehr-ud-Din took advantage of the establishment of a cantonment at Jullundur and started afresh. He prospered

in his trade with the British troops and the Police. He also got a licence to sell sulphur and saltpetre. He was not a wealthy man but earned sufficient to enable himself and his family to live like respectable citizens.

Mehr-ud-Din had two sons. Shams-ud-Din, the elder, helped his father in his business. He was married and had six children, three sons and three daughters. Shahab-ud-Din, the younger, was the more learned of the two sons. He knew Persian and Arabic as well as his own language, Urdu. Shahab-ud-Din was his father's favourite and was not expected to work or help in the business. It was thought to be below the dignity of his knowledge and education.

Shahab-ud-Din was married into a family whose financial and educational position was higher than his own. His wife Batul brought with her a handsome dowry of money, jewellery and clothes. Seven years after his marriage, Shahab-ud-Din died leaving his wife with two sons and an infant daughter.

Although Mehr-ud-Din was a Muslim, the

Hindu Rajput customs and traditions remained with him and his family. The death of Shahab-ud-Din put them in a quandary. They were afraid of Batul marrying a second time. Moreover, they did not wish to lose the riches she had brought with her. In order to achieve this object they pushed aside their sentimental customs and married Batul to Shams-ud-Din.

It has already been mentioned that Shams-ud-Din was already married and had children; his first wife was also alive when this second marriage was proposed to him. The Koran permits a man to take upon himself four wives at one time but it also provides certain conditions precedent which make it rather difficult for a man to have more than one wife.

When this marriage was proposed to Batul, she protested strongly. But her protestations were in vain. She was pressed and persuaded into it by her parents and father-in-law. They pointed out the security which this marriage meant for herself and her children. By this arrangement, they felt, the modesty and pride of the family

would also be safe. This was the beginning of all her troubles.

The first wife and her children treated her very unkindly and resented her as a second wife. They strove to do all in their power to make Batul and her children unhappy and miserable. Batul being quite a reserved and intelligent woman would take her children in her arms and listen to the abuses patiently. This was not the only mistake made by her father-in-law, he later inter-married two of her sons to two daughters of the first marriage. What a tragedy all this led to ! How ignorant and selfish mankind can be, arranging things for its own benefit and tranquillity without thinking of the consequence. This kind, gentle soul, Batul, was alone with enemies, not of her own making, but those made for her by such an absurd arrangement. To think that she and her children should be mocked at and insulted by the other children, who were instigated to swear and abuse—children who should have been taught only kind thoughts, and words, makes one wonder at such ignorance !



Some months after her marriage it was noted that Batul was to become a mother by her second husband. This fact caused great annoyance to the first wife and she being an illiterate woman brought about more pain and anguish to Batul, by her unfair jealousy.

When Batul knew of her condition, she became desperate, the misery she bore made her hysterical and nervous. She wished to die with her unborn child. She picked up stones and beat herself but it was not to be as she wanted. Under these sad circumstances and by the will and power of God, a son who was named Mohammad Hafeez, was born to this unhappy woman—the son who one day was to become famous and who is now one of the most important figures in Indian literature and poetry.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM CRADLE TO MOSQUE

**I**T was the year 1900, on the 14th of January.

At the time of the child's birth, there were two women in attendance. They tried to comfort and help the unhappy mother. They felt their moral responsibility to do so as they themselves were the cause of her marriage with this family in the first instance. They stayed in attendance throughout the ordeal trying to make up for the wrong they felt they had done. Both were wealthy and childless.

One of them was the wife of Karam Bakhsh, a cousin to the child's grandfather; the second woman Hasna, was his brother's widow.

The announcement of the son's birth to the other side of the family added fuel to the fire. They raved and showed their

indifference ; it seemed as if nothing would still them or make them see reason. Hasna, her brother and sister-in-law understood the situation. They decided to adopt the newborn child since they had none of their own.

Hasna went to the child's father and grandfather. She held out her shawl like a begging bowl saying, "Please put the baby here, in my shawl, so that I may bring him up as my own son. You have many, I have none." The affectionate appeal of the old woman could not be resisted. So, the day the child was born, he was given away to these women to keep and look after as their own.

In a Muslim family the first thing to take place after the birth of a child is the "Azan" or call to prayer. The first outside voice they want the child to hear is in praise of God—His Creator.

Hasna was so proud and happy to have this son to care for. She called religious men and Mullas to recite the Koran. Relatives and friends gathered together rejoicing and conveying their congratulations. Goats were killed in the name of Allah and many

cauldrons of *Zarda* and *Pulao* were cooked. The poor received alms and the musicians of the city enlivened the celebrations, entertaining the guests with their instrumental and vocal music.

This rejoicing and singing went on for some days, and eventually the party broke up, but for Hasna the celebration never ended. She rejoiced and was happy all her life with the child as her own. The house in which the child lived had a large courtyard, in which was a sheltered well and sometimes during the day the child was placed in his cot and put under the shade where he would sleep.

Women from the neighbouring houses used to bring their spinning wheels in the courtyard and between themselves they sang and held contests as to who would spin the most cotton. All through his babyhood the child lived and slept in this atmosphere. These influences imprinted themselves deeply on the young mind. Even now as a poet, he dreams of those happy days ; he hears the song of the spinning wheel, the voices of those contented happy women ; and how at



times they would take him out of his cot and play with his little hands and feet, holding and kissing him as if he belonged to them all.

Hasna and her sister used to rise at dawn to grind wheat. The child's soul would rise with them joining in their song and contentment. Karam Bakhsh, his adoptive father, also used to join in the pleasure of parenthood. He had a shop where he sold Indian rugs. At times he would put the child on a cushion and carry him to his shop. There he would gurgle and prattle away in his childish manner, drawing a crowd of on-lookers around him. How 'bitter sweet' it all was !

The poet in his solitude draws pictures of his happy and unhappy childhood. He often recollects his mother's unhappy life caused by the disturbance in the house and how he in a childlike manner would hold and kiss and try to comfort her by his promises to give her all the things she wanted when he grew up to be a big man.

Hafeez was four years, four months and four days old when his father and other relatives took him to the mosque for his first



lesson.

Dressed in gaudy silks and satins, wearing his round cap embroidered in gold, and his little eyes looking abnormally large, blackened with *surma*, Hafeez was ceremoniously taken to learn the teachings of the Koran.

It is the custom for all Muslim children to begin their first lesson at the age of four.

Hafeez was taken to the nearest mosque for his early schooling—a mosque which had been built by his forefathers. In the ancient days the mosque was not only used for prayers but also as a school. The Mosque, through the centuries, has been the university of Islam.

On entering the hall he saw two trays of *Laddoos* and many boys sitting upon mats with their legs crossed. In front of each child was a *Rihl* and all the children were reading Koran aloud, swaying their bodies to and fro. Facing the class sat the Mulla, in the same posture as the children, and on his lap he held a cane.

When the little boy entered with his relatives, the Mulla rose to greet them, the children gathered around the new pupil,

laughing and talking, looking at the sweet-meats before them ; for they knew that a new pupil meant sweets and a holiday. After greeting the child's relatives the Mulla quietened the boys. He then took the two trays of Laddoos and said prayers over them. During this time all present were reverently silent. The children stood with their arms raised to heaven, their souls lost in the sacred mystery of prayers. Hafeez felt overwhelmed, looking at this very humane picture. The scene was one he had never witnessed before ; it held him in its grip. The sweet memory of this reverence stays with him throughout his life. After offering prayers to God, the Mulla took a Laddoo, bit it and gave the remaining piece to Hafeez. The Laddoos were then distributed amongst the children. Some of them the Mulla put in his handkerchief, the remaining were then given to the child's relatives. After this ceremony the pupil was then given his first lesson. This did not interest the children as much as the announcement that followed. After giving an elder boy the duty of bringing Hafeez to school and taking him home,

the boys were given a holiday.

Hafeez soon settled down to his lessons. He helped in cleaning the Mosque which was done by the boys. The Muslims of the town helped to provide for the poor that lived in the Mosque. Hafeez with several other boys collected food and alms which were taken to the Mulla for distributing amongst the poor. This occurred every evening.

Like all children Hafeez was at times disobedient, for which he was punished. The form of punishment was amusing. He was ordered to stand with his head between his knees holding his ears with his hands from behind his legs. This also proved very tempting to his classmates. When the Mulla was not looking, one boy would quietly go and give him a push releasing him for the time being from his misery. This would result in two more boys being added to standing in the same position. At times there were as many as twelve standing like that and they used to wait patiently for outsiders to peep in and request the Mulla to release them, for which they were, no doubt, grateful.

Punishment and lessons were not the only aspects of the school. During the winter months the boys had much fun. One thing that delighted and pleased them was the roasting of corn. They took it to a shop for roasting and after giving a small share of it, the corn was put into a large roasting pan with hot sand in it which stood on a fire dug well into the ground. The boys then put the corn in the lap of their shirt. Before eating it they always asked the Mulla to join them in the corn feast. He never refused the request and after blessing the corn, they held quite a little banquet.

For two years Hafeez attended lessons at the mosque; he proved to be a very intelligent boy. He learned to recite parts of the Koran, from memory as well as reading them from the book, though, being so young, he could not understand its meanings. He also learnt the rudiments of Arabic and Persian. The works of Saadi, the famous poet of Iran were included in his course of studies. Hafeez was so brilliant that he was pointed out to his classmates and the occasional visitors as an exemplary student.



Women in those days very often used to hold purda meetings in different houses in the city as that was the only occasion when they could meet each other socially. Such meetings dealt with different topics, the main being religious. Some women were selected at each meeting to recite parts of the Koran, as well as poems in praise of the Prophet Mohammed (God be with him). Imagine at such a meeting a small attractive boy getting up on the platform and singing and reciting from the holy Koran, enchanting the audience with his melodious voice. These meetings he loved attending and took a childish delight in reciting.

He amazed all those who heard his recitation and endeared himself to all by his sincerity and earnestness. He convinced the congregation that he would one day be a servant and worker of Islam. His mother was delighted and was very proud of him. She prayed that God would guide him to serve his people.

After two years at the mosque the boy's adoptive parents felt that it was no longer necessary for him to continue his religious



studies. He had learnt all that was needed from the religious point of view. They intended to send him to a school for the attainment of secular education.

When the day approached for him to take his last lesson at the mosque, everything was arranged. Sweetmeats, clothes and a turban were offered with fifty-one rupees to the Mulla which he placed in the courtyard of the mosque. Children and the parting pupil with his relatives gathered around and joined in the prayer that was recited over these gifts.

When the Mulla finished his prayer he put his hand on the boy's head saying :

“ You are young and you are leaving the mosque and me, as many before you ; you are going into the world ; but before you go I wish to give you my last lesson. Remember it all your life ; if you do not understand it now, keep it in your memory and when you are older you will understand the full meaning of my words :

First you are a Muslim and believe that God who creates and nourishes us, is only one. He is powerful and also merciful, fear Him only, believe that if you fear Him and pray to Him you will not fear any one else.

Secondly believe that Muhammed (God's blessings be with him) is God's true messenger and saviour of our souls from evil, believe that God sent many messengers called prophets, and that they are true; do not doubt this during your life.

Thirdly believe, we are all from God, no man is less than another. Human greatness is only counted in the series of humanity.

The last thing, my boy, is that the Koran is from God and is the only guide of life. It will tell you what is lawful and unlawful. Go now, but do not forget your mosque or your worldly ignorant teacher; may God bless you and your path."

Young Hafeez saw two tears roll from the eyes of the Mulla, down his cheeks on to his long white sacred beard. Indeed this blessing guides the Poet in all he undertakes to do; these gentle words spoken to an ignorant child show their effect now if they did not at the time of hearing. I myself noticed tears in the eyes of the Poet whilst he was telling me of this happening. The beauty and truth of such a lesson will, no doubt, guide him throughout his life.

The Poet's last lesson at the mosque was over. His friends gathered around, embracing

him. They shook hands and said good-bye to a friend whose fate was to lead him on the path of fame, accompanied by severe hardships and hunger.

## CHAPTER III

### THE BUD OF PROMISE

**T**HE next day saw Hafeez at an American Mission school. There he found the atmosphere far different from the Mosque. There were many rules and regulations. Being a self-willed spoilt boy he was not tolerant of rule, and disregarded restrictions which did not agree with his will; he consequently began to get into trouble through mischief. Nevertheless, he took a great interest in his studies; he learnt languages and general knowledge so well that it seemed as if they were born in him. His studies were not followed up according to school rules but they were none the less applied to.

Again here at the school he received good marks for all subjects taught to him, but he showed no inclination for physical sports. Whenever he had to attend his classes he would run out of school and with what

money he had in his pocket he would go off somewhere, and amuse himself. For absence from school a small fine was imposed on the boys.

Hafeez smilingly paid this fine and continued to run off when it suited him. The school master, realizing that Hafeez always had sufficient money to pay these fines, concluded that a more severe kind of punishment would probably do him more good. The next time he gave himself leave, he was reported to the headmaster, who sent in a complaint to his parents. He, thereupon, received a sound thrashing from his father before going to school ; the headmaster gave him a caning, and again on arriving home his mother whipped him. This however did not do him any good : he continued to regulate his own studies, running off when physical instruction and arithmetic arrived on the scene. Funnily enough at the close of each term he brushed up his arithmetic and ended up with full marks.

From the age of twelve, Hafeez went to many different schools. His parents and relatives had much difficulty with him, every



school he went to had restrictions that did not agree with his own defiant will and because of this he would run off from one school to another.

It was in his second class at the age of seven when Hafeez wrote his first poem. This was written in praise of the Prophet Muhammed. Why this particular thought entered his mind he cannot now explain. As a matter of fact *Shahnama-i-Islam*, the great epic poem which stands as the chief work of his life, is the echo of the same voice that first sounded in the garb of this poem which runs as follows :—

محمد کی کشتی میں ہوں گا سوار  
تو ہو جائیگا میرا بیڑا بھی پار  
محمد حفیظ نے بنائی غزل  
ہے اسوقت اُسپر خدا کا فضل

“ I will embark in the boat of Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him).

Then my boat will reach the shore safely.

Muhammad Hafeez has composed a poem.

God's grace is now upon him.”

Hafeez was in a dark room when he wrote. By his side was a wooden pen and a board; it seemed as if some unseen hand guided him to pick-up the pen and write. He wrote about one hundred verses, and did not realize that he was at that time writing poetry and when he wrote he sang, and felt a pleasing elation in his whole body. His vocabulary was very poor and the language was a mixture of Urdu and Punjabi; the poem was very childish but the thoughts were nevertheless great for a child of his age.

For full one week Hafeez thought of nothing else but the poem he had written. He wrote it on pieces of paper, gilded the edges and distributed them amongst his friends. This poem however lived a short life. After one week it was completely forgotten for some years at least.

During his school days the little poet made one real friend. This child friend was very dear to him. They thought only of each other and for three or four years were almost inseparable; they shared everything they had in mischief and trouble. Hafeez always had sufficient pocket money given to

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him by his parents, which proved of help to them in their wanderings and decisions when running off from school.

Like any other naughty children, the city, with all its amusements, attracted them; they would be found with their pockets stuffed with sweets and nuts having a grand time on their own. This friendship continued for about four years. When he reached the age of twelve, his young friend began to go off with other boys against his desire.

The countryside then became his friend; he liked the peace and solitude, where he could amuse himself. Often, instead of going to school, he would wander off into the meadows and with the money he had in his pocket he bought all types of fiction and poetry books. These he would put into his satchel and after saying Salaam to his parents he would saunter off anywhere but to the school. In the afternoon, Hafeez would then go home, pretending as if he was just arriving from school, take his meal and with his precious books go into his room where he would sit up all night reading them.

This went on for months without ever being suspected, when one day his mother thinking that he was indeed studying much too hard went to tell him that he was a good boy to take so much interest in his lessons, but it was not necessary to work so hard. Imagine how his seat hurt him when she found him engrossed in books which were anything but those which he was expected to study for the school !

## CHAPTER IV

### WANDER LUST

**I**N his thirteenth year, Hafeez ran away from school for good. He stole a sum of money from his home and ran away to Delhi, Meerut, Bombay and other towns. It was during this escapade that he thought of improving his knowledge of Urdu. Strolling about the Delhi streets and Meerut bazars, he learnt the language and imbibed its true spirit and right accent—by hearing it talked by the people themselves.

Whilst he was thus away, his parents were enquiring into his whereabouts, around the neighbouring districts and police stations. Had his parents enquired at the police station at Delhi, they most certainly would have got all the information required. Hafeez had been taken into custody.

He had been giving away five and ten rupee notes to beggars, and the police had



become suspicious and taken him off to the station. They put questions to him. He however satisfied them that he was not a thief and on being released thought it best to go off home. I suppose he had really run short of money, otherwise he would not have thought of returning.

Although it was not unusual for him to be away from home, his absence always caused his people anxiety. Hafeez had this time been away for four months. On his return he received the punishment due to him which quietened him down for a while. Hafeez did however remain unconquered by blows—he had an untamed lawless nature and though he got into every mischief and trouble, he had intellectual ambitions. His understanding and precocious development of imagination never permitted him to mingle with children. His mind was always actively employed; his thoughts were directed to those great objects which employ the thoughts of great men. Books were a mania with him; he always had one in hand reading, in and out of season.

After having passed his examination mere

school books no longer interested him. He studied literature whenever he had the opportunity, and he was never happy unless he was miles away from home and those he knew. He would be found in the country sitting on the grass drawing inspiration from nature; he would sit and feel he was the only human creature alive. If only he could be alone, always, to listen to the songs of the birds, the sigh of the trees and the ripple of the streams, with the scent of the fresh earth and the air around filled with the fragrant odour of flowers..... If it were possible, Hafeez would shut himself away with the beauty and pleasures of nature and have no contact with the outside human world.

Any happiness which Hafeez got during his childhood he got it by doing the things that pleased him most; but, then, all through his life he has done what he wanted. Although he kept away from serious troubles, his wild wilfulness caused his real mother grave anxiety. Her life was in itself mere existence, and her son Hafeez only aggravated this unhappy state of life.

By the time Hafeez had reached his sixteenth year, the shadow of death had taken a heavy toll of his family. He had lost four brothers, his grandfather, Hasna, who had delighted in bringing him up and also his adoptive father.

Each of his brothers left a widow and children to support. Burden lay on the shoulders of Shams-ud-Din, Hafeez's father. Sense of duty and feelings of dignity seem to be the most striking features of this family. Shams-ud-Din strove to maintain the widows and their children. Although these women were daughters-in-law and not blood relations, yet they belonged to this family and he must provide for them. This burden which fell on Shams-ud-Din proved very heavy and played extremely on his nerves and health ; he became easily excitable and grumpy.

His first wife grieved over the death of her two sons, she became bitter. Such conditions might have brought the two women together in their sorrow, but fate plays fantastic tricks on humanity. One woman was destined to live her life in sorrow. And

the second woman's life too had become bitterness itself. Financially, the family was now in a desperate condition. They were plunged into depression and misery.

Hafeez at this time had begun writing verse seriously and such domestic conditions had their effect, indirectly, on him and his work. He was quite unaware of the depth of the impression which such morbid surroundings had on his mind. The world was full of sorrow, unhappiness and selfishness, as he expressed it in his verses :

میں وہ برگ خزاں دیدہ ہوں اس گلزار ہستی میں  
بگولے جس کے شائق - جس کی عاشق باد صرصر ہو

I am an autumn leaf in the garden of Life  
Cherished by Whirl-winds and loved by Sand-storms.

ہوئی یہ رات بھر میں خندہ ہائے عیش کی صورت  
چمن کا غنچہ غنچہ صبح کو اک چشم گریاں تھا

In one night only the smiles of joy came to this end ;  
In the morning every bud in bloom had become a  
tearful eye.



دُزاق دو جہاں کے خزانے کو کیا ہوا  
ملتا ہے رنج وہ بھی کسی کا دیا ہوا

What has become of the treasures of One who gives  
Sustenance to both the Worlds !

I am given only grief, that too by some one else.

وہ ہم نہیں کہ مریں عمر جاوداں کے لئے  
دعائیں مانگتے ہیں مرگ ناگہاں کے لئے

I am not one longing for eternal life  
I pray only for unexpected death.

غنچہ غنچہ خوف سے مجھ کو نظر آیا قفس  
بتے بتے پر ہوا دھوکا کف صیاد کا

Each bud, out of fright, appeared to me like a cage.  
Each leaf deluded me as though it were the hand  
of a hunter.

ہو نہ احساس اسیری تو دھائی ہے محال  
ایسے قیدی نام تک لیتے نہیں ميعاد کا

Where there is no feeling of captivity, it is impossible  
to expect release.

Such prisoners do not even want to know for how  
long they are imprisoned.



He did not know at this stage that it would be possible for him to earn money from his writings and his verses remained unpublished until a later date.

Hafeez was sixteen when he had lost his adoptive father. After his death, Hafeez found that he had spent all of his father's money and all that now remained were three houses. Hafeez from now onwards went to live with his mother. He was upset to find his family disliking, almost hating, him. They never forgot to remind him that he was a waster. It was true that he could not hoard money, and never at any time realized responsibility; but then his upbringing had made him useless for business and left him ignorant as regards a career which would enable him to maintain himself and the family. Writing verse was the only thing he did and this he looked upon as his hobby.



## CHAPTER V

### THE CHALLENGE OF LIFE

**D**URING Hafeez's sixteenth year, his mother, seeing that he was such an irresponsible person, thought that it was time to make him understand life, if he wished to live in the world. The solution was marriage.

Trusting that this would turn out to be the best remedy, his marriage was arranged. The bride-to-be, as it happened, was already betrothed to him from her cradle—his own distant relative.

The young bride was quite an innocent girl of fifteen who did not understand a thing about responsibility. But this marriage proved successful and turned out to be a wise step taken by Hafeez's mother. Hafeez from the day he married began to understand life and he saw that to achieve anything at all, it was necessary to shoulder difficulties

and responsibilities. And he proved to his mother that he could be the son she wanted him to be.

Three days after his marriage Hafeez showed his true nature and manly character. His step-brother raised objections and resented keeping the family with him any longer. He displayed his true spirit by using insulting language towards Hafeez's mother. She looked at Hafeez in a pathetic helpless manner. He read in her face the sufferings she had borne during the past years.

Hafeez immediately took his wife, mother and two sisters to a house in another part of Jullundur. This made him determined that they would no longer suffer from, and listen to, the insults of the other side of the family.

When Hafeez took this step, he had no means of earning and not a penny in his pocket. But that did not trouble him in the least. What he wanted was to get away from this undesirable family and start life anew. The thing now was to look for work. But he found that there was no scope for inexperienced men. After many disappoint-

ing weeks he felt dejected and depressed. He saw the path was strewn with thorns and to tread bare-footed on it seemed an impossibility. He remembered his past life. The words of his father that Hafeez was quite incapable of discharging his responsibility in life, echoed once more in his ears and left an indelible impression on his heart. The self-willedness of childhood returned and made him determined to succeed.

This was the year 1917, during the Great War.

Hafeez was at last successful in obtaining a position in a factory, making uniforms for troops. The hours were long and tiring, starting from six in the morning and finishing at six in the evening. For this he received thirty-five rupees a month. Hafeez would rise at four in the morning, wrap his breakfast and lunch in a handkerchief, then set to walk five miles away to work. On his way he would stop occasionally to take a snack. In the evening, he returned tired and worn; his salary did not permit him to travel by carriage or any kind of conveyance. The little money he earned was needed for



the bare necessities of life, and even then it was not sufficient to support the number of mouths depending on him. But they did their best in managing on what they received. Hafeez felt somewhat satisfied that he was earning something to maintain and support those depending upon him.

Unfortunately after three months his employers found out that he was not experienced enough and gave him notice to leave. Hafeez was disappointed but it did not however dampen his spirit. Again he searched for work and after a week or so, he arranged to go to work for a tailor. He obtained this job on condition that he would give up half of his salary in payment for his learning the profession. He found, he was getting less than what he earned previously. This he kept a secret from his wife and mother; he did not want them to think that they were a burden on him or that it was proving difficult for him to support them. He borrowed money to make up his depleted wages and pretended that this job was better than the last one.

Hafeez was not working whole-heartedly. He felt that he was destined for a better and

higher position. His imagination soared very high, from boyhood, and he wanted to do what seemed impossible to other boys. Although his financial position worried him to a great extent, he felt degraded in doing this work which he was convinced was not his. He still wrote his verses and attended poetical meetings. These were the only two things that interested and helped to keep him happy and content. He also managed to read many poems written by the famous Persian and Urdu poets. His heart was with his poetry and not with the needle.

Hafeez again lost his job after four months as he did not prove to be quick enough at his work. Knowing him to-day, I cannot help but smile to think of this great poet sitting with a needle and cotton in his hand, sewing tunics! He gives me the impression of a man who has written poetry, songs and stories all his life.

As the Poet often recites to himself, in the words of Hasrat Mohani :

ہے مشق سخن جاری - چکی کی مشقت بھی  
اک طرفہ تماشا ہے حسرت کی طبیعت بھی

“He is practising the composition of poetry along with the hardships of grinding flour.

What a funny thing the nature of Hasrat is !”

After a month or so Hafeez managed to secure a contract for sewing tunics. This took him many miles away from home. He entered into a partnership with a friend and they both succeeded in running the business for about twelve months.

## CHAPTER VI

### FIRST LAURELS

THE cyclone of the Great War was at that time playing havoc in the European countries. Hafeez, sauntering about one day, read a poster stuck to the wall inviting all poets to join in a *mushaira* in which a prize was to be awarded for the best poem on the War.

Hafeez felt inclined to enter this competition, but thinking seriously over this matter he felt a sort of inferiority complex, considering himself as no match for the poets of fame and renown. Hafeez was in his preliminary stage of poetry while many of the expected competitors had got their works published and were personally known to the organisers of this contest. However, one of his friends encouraged him to participate. But still he could not see any ray of hope in accepting the proposal.

The storm of poetry latent in him, quite of a sudden, prevailed over wavering intentions, and gave him pluck. It forced Hafeez to decide in the affirmative.

He went to the meeting and having listened to the other poets came to the conclusion that they did not come up to his standard. He then felt confident in competing and sure of his success. When his turn came to give his recitation, the supposed masters of poetry, some bearing long and snowy beards, others young but locally reputed, mocked at him, exchanging mischievous smiles with one another, pointing at the young self-conceited boy who, they thought, not knowing his worth, was daring to compete with them.

Outwardly composed, Hafeez, on hearing his name, rose to walk to the platform. He had been sitting with his coat off. On getting up he flung it over his shoulder. In doing so his few coins fell out of his pocket and rolled all over the floor. Calmly and undisturbedly he bent down to pick up every coin. After counting them and making sure that they were all there, he climbed the platform and started recitation. He



certainly looked strange running around the place picking up the annas and pice regardless of those present waiting for him. His poem however made up for it all.

It related the cruelties of the Germans on the Liege Castle, in Belgium. He described the destruction and horror of the German attack with such literary force that it seemed as if it were being devastated before them. The poem was also an appeal to help the suffering and the homeless. The originality of his description which is a conspicuous feature of Hafeez's art, impressed the audience so much, that they felt as if before them stood a new master who had brought to them a new type of poetry. It was something different from the old school of thought. When Hafeez saw the looks of astonishment and appreciation on the faces of those who had fame, his heart beat with excitement. This, the verdict of the audience, pleased him more than the verdict of the judges, which too went unanimously in his favour. For eight years Hafeez had been writing poetry and during that time he alone enjoyed it, now it began to be enjoyed by the public.

Hafeez was given the prize—a gold medal. His heart was light. He felt, indeed, a boy of seventeen. What should he do with the medal, now that it was in his possession? It came to a delightful end. On returning home, Hafeez took the medal to a goldsmith and asked him to melt it down and make a pair of ear-rings. The goldsmith told the poet that it would take some time to do this, but he was so impatient and excited that he refused to leave the shop until the ear-rings were made.

When he got home he presented his medal in the shape of the ear-rings to his mother to be given to his wife. When he told them the story of the ear-rings they were surprised for they knew nothing of his intention to enter the contest.

The people who were present at the meeting took the news to the poet's father and congratulated him on having such a brilliant son. This news surprised the family: they did not understand and appreciate the value and the beauty of poetry. They thought and said it was the work of madmen. To them a poet and a lazy worthless individual

were synonymous terms. Poetry in the Punjab was not then much appreciated and the writers gained nothing by it, unless they were in any way connected with the courts of the native states.

Hafeez, however, after seeing the result of the contest felt that poetry was the providential aim of his life. He decided to spend more time on it.

Hafeez's recitation in this contest impressed the Deputy Commissioner most deeply, although he was an English man. A few days later, he specially invited Hafeez to attend a Durbar held by the Commissioner. Hafeez went there and occupied his seat in the distinguished gallery according to the number of the invitation card. The proceedings had not yet commenced. The magistrate incharge of the management came to him and asked him not to sit there as his dress was poor and quite unsuitable to the dignity of the occasion. Hafeez did not take any notice of his words. After a few moments he again came and insisted that he should retire from the place. The poet again kept quiet. The third time when

the officer still persisted and the guests sitting around him laughed and cut jokes at him, Hafeez felt greatly insulted. This time in the heat of anger he replied, "The invitation was to me and not to my clothes. I have come in a dress which I usually wear and which I can afford to get. If at all there was any necessity to invite me in fine clothes, the authorities ought to have sent to me a court dress along with this invitation." He continued the rebuke saying "I have come in a dress which I managed to make out of my most honest and laborious earnings. In it I feel pleasure and pride." This answer nonplussed the inquisitive, disturbing magistrate and now those round about were laughing at him.

On the arrival of the Deputy Commissioner the magistrate complained to him and said that that man was not in a suitable dress to occupy the chair. The Deputy Commissioner coming over and seeing Hafeez, warmly shook hands with him, and asked the magistrate not to bother himself about his dress and added, addressing Hafeez, "Don't mind it. Your dress is quite suitable;



because your dress is not your clothes, but your ability and deep imagination.”

The incident was over but it left a deep impression on Hafeez's mind. It made him realise, all at once, that these official invitations did not necessarily mean honour.

This, in fact, proved to be a turning point in his attitude towards life.





## CHAPTER VII

### MEETING THE MASTER

**T**HERE was a great poet named Girami who belonged to Jullundur and was incidentally a Mosque-fellow of Hafeez's father. Girami was a great writer of Persian poetry. Although he had never visited Persia, he spoke and wrote the language fluently. It was recognised that his poetry came to the level of the great Persian poets. Girami was court-poet of the late His Exalted Highness Nawab Sir Mahbub Ali Khan of Hyderabad. Shortly after Hafeez's first recitation Girami retired from the court of Hyderabad and returned to Jullundur where he gave, during his retirement, many recitations to the public. He always drew a great audience, for the people of Jullundur were proud of him. Hafeez attended these meetings and like many others he was enamoured of the poetry of Girami.

Hafeez sent some of his own work to Girami and asked him to correct it. In reply the master wrote that Hafeez must correct it himself if he wished to be a poet. Girami also invited Hafeez to meet him, which he did, and after an hour's conversation Hafeez was told that his thoughts were very promising and spoke of a brilliant future. He returned home receiving valuable advice and help. Girami went to see Hafeez's father and told him of his son's future as a poet, but unfortunately he could not visualise his son's career as a poet of such distinction and fame. He told Girami of his son's early life which from his standards was lazy and wasteful and asked him to discourage and turn his mind to a useful living and earning as an ordinary responsible man. He also added, "Up to this time he has been a base coin to us. All men cannot be Girami; please tell my son that he must forget poetry and work like his father to maintain himself and his family." Girami answered that if this bad coin continued to devote his time to poetry, he would one day become the precious current coin of the day. He was sure to get undying

prestige for himself and to prove a source of pride to the whole family, and to his country.

This great man spoke truly enough. He helped Hafeez in all he could by adopting him as his pupil. He gave valuable corrections and suggestions to him in his works and also improved them now and then. By his contact with Girami, Hafeez's knowledge of Persian improved a lot.

Three or four months after this episode the Poet's father passed over his business to his eldest son, who unfortunately did not take such an interest in it as the father. He lost all contracts which were the major source of their income and was left only with the shop. This worried and depressed the old man very much. Hafeez then decided to look after his father himself. But the Poet himself now drew more and more towards his literary work and began to neglect his own business and spend more time with Girami in the meetings, and *mushairas* at which he also recited.

When Hafeez's recitations became popular many beginners took their work to him for corrections. He thus found himself acting



as an honorary tutor. Other poets of name were also in the same position. This often led to rivalry among the teachers and poetical combats between Hafeez and the others. They began to provoke contests amongst themselves by making their pupils challenge the poetry written by their contemporaries.

Hafeez, proud of his art, was determined to make his pupils stand higher than the others ; Girami thought it best to interrupt him in this practice by saying, “ Hafeez, you have become a great *Ustad*. You will go crazy. Keep your mind on your own work and put your creative imagination into your own poetry. Do not follow the route adopted by the poets of the ancient days. Put new wine into the old glasses.” Hafeez was struck by these words and stopped running around with pupils ; he worked and devoted his time to himself only.

Hafeez was a poet at heart and this did not help him in his business. And he lost a great deal of work and found himself in difficulties. In order to maintain his family, it then became necessary to sell one of the three houses which had been left to Hafeez

by his adoptive father. He knew his own father would raise objections to it if he heard of this intention. The sale of the house could not be kept a secret for long and when his father discovered it, he was hurt and got angry. Hafeez's acquaintances were also snobbish towards him and felt prejudiced against him for this action. It was a family trait to feel pride in continuing possession of the property, belonging to them, however deteriorated it might have become. The selling of belongings was construed as tantamount to bankruptcy and thus degrading to all.

With a part of the money Hafeez obtained from the house, he opened a shop in the city where he made and sold Indian caps. Since he was not a businessman at heart he was forced to close this shop also as it turned out to be a complete failure and meant nothing short of total loss.

During these months the poet's first child, a daughter, was born.

Hafeez from now on roams about feeling unsettled, discontented and restless for several years.

It was during these wanderings that Hafeez had one of the unique experiences of his life. He happened to come upon an old decrepit building, a village *Takya*, on the Hoshiarpur road. Feeling very hungry and tired, he decided to look in and find out if he could get something to eat to satisfy his hunger.

Inside he saw, wrapped in dirty shawls and blankets, five or six beggars lying huddled together. They hailed him as a brother and gave him food. This satisfied his need. In payment for their warm hospitality, Hafeez recited to them some of his poems. The beggars felt that here was a kind of man who was a God-send to them. He would entertain and amuse them all, by his recitations and humour.

By force of persuasion, they induced him to remain with them as the singing vagabond poet. Hafeez's sense of humour was tickled by this proposal and he agreed to it. For over three months this bliss for Hafeez and happiness for the enchanted beggars lasted. Then his conscience began to prick him for he had a wife and a family to

maintain. At last, with much reluctance on the part of the beggars, he was able to take leave of them, and they said goodbye to each other.

After this, he went about doing many jobs, and taking up new positions, until he achieved the real desire of his heart.





## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NEW WAY

**I**N the year 1919, the Punjab Congress Provincial Conference was to be held in Jullundur. Dr. S. D. Kitchlew, the veteran Congressite of the Punjab, called on Hafeez and asked him to attend the first meeting which they were holding for preparing the ground, and write a poem against the Rowllat Act. It was a measure against which the whole country had protested. The shooting at Jallianwala Bagh was an aftermath of this legislation. Hafeez told Dr. Kitchlew that he was not a political man, but he was quite willing to do his best to help their cause. He wrote and recited a poem on the misery and hardships of the poor in India.

Hafeez is a man who likes to see justice done to all : he makes no enemies and considers all his friends. Being a friend and sympathiser of the poor and the oppressed,

he took this opportunity to speak for those in need. His poem had a great effect on the audience. They were so excited with enthusiasm that they feverishly cheered him while he was reciting, and took him round on their shoulders after he had finished.

Incidentally Hafeez was the first poet to dare recite from a political platform in those stormy days. No other person had ventured to do so. The result was that Hafeez found himself being shadowed by a detective. A friend of the Poet says, "He was thought to be a rogue of some sort." Since that day other poets have followed Hafeez and given their recitations from the political platform.

Soon after this meeting Hafeez took up a job, a long way away from home, as sales manager with Singer's Sewing Machines at their India Branch in Montgomery District. This position he held for one year. During this period he was restless—he wanted to do no other work but write poetry. But he also realized that he could not make money in that pursuit, so he tried to feel content in writing poetry for his own pleasure. It

was during his year with Singer's when Hafeez wrote many poems on the downfall of the Turks and about the effect of the Great War on their country. But this type of poetry was of momentary interest. It was written in the old poetical style. What he really wanted was to express his own feelings in his own individual style—idealism, realism and romance—all rolled into one.

Hafeez, during this period of one year, acting as sales-manager used to travel on a horse to recover instalments due on the machines sold on hire-purchase system. But he soon got tired and disgusted with this work also. He used to wonder as to what the difference was between him and the horse!

The marriage of his youngest sister took place by the end of this year. He sold his second house to buy her trousseau and give her a dowry. With the surplus money, he returned to Jullundur where he again met Girami and told him of his intention to start a monthly magazine in Urdu. Girami encouraged Hafeez by contributing

to it some of his poems. He also helped by writing to other authors and poets asking them to send their writings for publication to this magazine. All this help encouraged Hafeez in starting the monthly journal *Ejaz* (Miracle) which was intended to keep to a very high standard. Unfortunately the majority of the contributions he received were not of the standard he wanted to keep up. So he refused to print them with the result that the magazine failed, leaving him out of pocket. And Hafeez again ran into bankruptcy.

A short while after this failure Hafeez quarrelled with his father. The cause being the selling of his third and the last house. His father asked him the reasons for selling it which he refused to tell, the reason was a noble deed. A near relative having been entangled in financial difficulties went to Hafeez in full confidence and placing his real position before him asked for his help. Hafeez promised to respect the confidence he reposed in him and assisted him by selling this house and giving him the amount received from it. The poet annoyed his



father by his refusing to reveal the facts. The only thing Hafeez would say was that he had to sell it. This tried his father's patience so much that, regardless of his son's age, he beat him and ordered him to pack up and take away with him his wife and family, out of the city. The fact that Hafeez was pledged to secrecy was beyond his appreciation.

After being turned out of his own house and feeling tired at heart, Hafeez took his wife and child to his father-in-law at Lahore.

Feeling too sick in mind to settle down he felt the call of wanderlust which had so often in the past taken him to the wilderness. He then went to Kashmir on foot. In his misery he wandered around the countryside unconsciously searching for consolation which he only found in Kashmir. He was twenty-one now, and for the first time in his life he saw and appreciated the real beauty of nature. There he stayed three months feeling peaceful at heart and in mind. He vowed he would stay for ever but he had his wife with a child to look after, and three months was a long time to be away.



On returning to Lahore, Hafeez attended a meeting held in an institute which was frequented by authors, poets and learned men of every description who subscribed towards the institute. Propaganda was being made to help Urdu literature and though Hafeez was yet unknown in Lahore, he wanted to attend it out of curiosity and interest. Recitations were given by different members of the institute. Hafeez also felt inclined to recite but shyness had the upper hand of him. All the members held some sort of important degrees. So he contented himself by purchasing a ticket and sat in a corner with the public.

At this meeting there happened to be present four students from Jullundur who were studying at the University. They spied Hafeez and approached the secretary of the meeting and told him of a poet hiding himself, in a corner, from the audience. They pointed him out and talked of his work and poetry. Unaware of all this, Hafeez was sitting absorbed in the recitations and he did not know that his name would be called out. He was astonished, even bewildered to

find fingers pointed at him and his name being called for a recitation. Hafeez came to the platform unprepared and felt afraid of the professors and learned men present. His recitation however surprized again, both the members of the Institute and the audience. He was requested to repeat the recitation again and again. The President of the meeting Khan Bahadur, now the Hon'ble Sir Abdul Qadir congratulated him on his so successful and impressive a poetic attempt. After a short conversation with the President, Hafeez retired from the place with his heart full of delight. This was Hafeez's introduction to the literary circles in the capital of the Punjab.

The Khan Bahadur on being informed, that Hafeez was a pupil of Girami, remarked that he expected him to be a shining poet and the rising sun on the horizon of Urdu literature. He also offered to help Hafeez in any possible literary way ; for eighteen years now this casual meeting has been maturing into a strong bond of friendship and mutual regard.



## CHAPTER IX

### TWO RUPEES A DAY

NEW fields of activity were now unfolding themselves and Hafeez stepped into the parlour of professional journalism. A job in the editorial staff of a magazine at Lahore was offered to Hafeez at sixty rupees a month, which he, being in such difficulty, readily accepted. The proprietor of this paper was a peculiarly irresponsible individual. Whenever the day approached to pay Hafeez his wages he used to disappear for three or four days, conveniently forgetting to pay him on his return.

The first month passed and Hafeez received no salary. Being rather reserved he did not approach the proprietor and let the matter stand, quite optimistically thinking that he would receive two months' salary at the end of the next month. The same thing happened the second and again the third time.

Hafeez found himself borrowing and running into debt until, at last, he felt that it was time to ask for his salary. After the month had elapsed, he could not continue the borrowing business any longer and requested his employer to pay up his salary which was long overdue, clearly explaining to him that it was impossible for him to manage his subsistence under such untoward circumstances. But the position turned out to be that when payment was due to him for three months, his account for one month even was not being cleared off.

However, Hafeez having received very big words and a very small sum, in what was considered to be a full and final settlement, arranged anew to be paid off daily at the rate of Rs. 2. He hoped that that arrangement at last would work smoothly. But this too did not prove any better than the first one and often his daily bread was missing.

Hafeez found himself doing the most unusual work for this magazine. Several men with literary ambitions who wished to become well-known in the country and fancied that they could write poetry and



articles well enough for publication sent them to the proprietor, and payed a sum of money to him to have their work corrected and printed in his magazine. Often this work was crude and of an absurdly low standard. Many times he had to write every bit of it. The owner pocketed the money and it was Hafeez who had to grind such poor stuff through the mill of criticism.

There was yet another evil rampant. Some men who at least had the sense to know that they could not write but nevertheless desired to see their name in print as poets or writers arranged some money to be paid to the proprietor if he only consented to get essays written by somebody and published them under their name. This work also was given to Hafeez who found himself turning out the most extraordinary articles and poems under assumed names. This was a great pity, for the magazine consisted of short stories, poems, and essays, each and every one of which was his own work and yet he did not dare ask for the credit. It all went to those puffed up businessmen with brainless heads and pockets full of money.

During these days, Hafeez continued to receive his salary whenever it was convenient to his employer. Bad payments coupled with the fact that he was not writing for his own benefit and name forced him merely to earn a very meagre sum.

Lahore, the centre of education and political movements in the Punjab, has a great deal of printing and publishing done. The poet after his duty hours on the magazine took piece-work for a children's weekly. He specialized in writing for children. Although he found himself working late at night, into the early hours of the morning, he enjoyed this work. He also realized that it was necessary to do this, in view of his financial position, as besides his wife and children, he had to give adequate help to his mother and sisters, who were living in Jullundhur.

After serving for eighteen months on this magazine, he, obtained another job to work as chief editor of two other magazines of high standard named *Hazardastan* and *Naunihal*. The salary was no doubt the same but there was the relieving feature that here the payment was not too irregular,

which absolved Hafeez from his mental worries. But unfortunately this also did not last for long. After a dispute with the proprietor Hafeez threw his pen down and got an employment in two other papers—the *Tahzib-i-Niswan* and the *Phul*. The former was the voice of women while the latter was meant for children.

Hafeez during this period was tossed about from one job to another but everyday he was making his mark as a poet and a writer, who could no longer be ignored. He was setting up new standards. Most poets up to that time had only followed the old style of writing Ghazals, after the fashion of Persian poets. They paid their attention more to the selection of bombastic words and their different uses and variety of expression, regardless of putting therein any lofty thoughts concerning the human soul. The public were tired of listening to the old romances of “Laila and Majnoon” and the metaphoric praise of the beloved. Hafeez put new life in it. He, in his picturesque style, wrote lyric poems which contained the pathos of despairing life and the charm of

realism. The thought was noble and lofty, but at the same time the diction in which it was expressed was beautifully clear and simple—the plain simple everyday words with which even an ordinary man is familiar from childhood.

In his ambitions and trend of thought, he touches the heights of Shelley. He is different from him in the sense that Hafeez derives his inspiration from the things around him. His background is realistic. He sees the world as it really is, in its concrete form. Hafeez was born to be the people's poet.

Besides the newness of his thought he introduced quite a new style of expression which attracted the attention of all who listened to him. The young men began to copy him in every respect and the old poets began to feel jealous of him. This was the highest appreciation of Hafeez's poetry.

The ever-increasing popularity of Hafeez lit a revengeful fire of jealousy in the hearts of the old poets who began to cast a slur on him. Hafeez being very sensitive, sentimental and self-respecting, intended to pay



them back in the same coin.

Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, the great Indian poet and philosopher, who was by that time sufficiently interested in Hafeez's art, advised him to turn a deaf ear towards this propaganda. He told him, "Whenever a newcomer enters the poetical world, the old conservative poets make a noise. This can only be stopped by ignoring them all." Hafeez respected his advice and controlled himself to remain unaffected by the sarcastic comments levelled against him. Sir Abdul Qadir also advised him to refrain from plunging himself into this mud-throwing at each other as it would mar his career and spoil his mission of serving the cause of Urdu poetry.

Sir Abdul helped and worked with Hafeez in two ways. One by giving his generous and sincere advice to him and second by awakening in him his latent genius to blossom into flower just as a gardener does with his plants. Hafeez dedicated his book *Soz-o-Saz* published in 1933 to Sir Abdul Qadir. The dedication runs as follows :

"The gardener's eyes happened to fall on a wild-



growing plant. He was pleased to see it, and thought that if this plant was nurtured, it would certainly bear good fruit. With this idea uppermost in his mind he began to tend this wild-growing plant along with others he had planted himself, and protected it from all kinds of earthly calamities. The result of this paternal care on the part of the gardener was that this plant, which had remained uncared for, for such a long time, began to blossom forth and to yield fruit. This plant had now become a strong tree but its branches were bent owing to the burden of gratitude that lay heavy upon them. However its fruits both ripe and unripe were there to be the source of delight and pleasure to the gardener."

With these words Hafeez respectfully presented *The Soz-o-Saz* to his greatest and sincerest patron and friend the Hon'ble Sir Abdul Qadir.

Many of Hafeez's friends had great influence in the literary domain in India. They helped a lot in counteracting the propaganda against him by jealous rivals. His one friend, Pandit Hari Chand Akhtar, M.A., in particular, deserves special mention, who courageously defended Hafeez through thick and thin and tried to do full justice to him in face of the ill comments of narrow-minded

poets. He is even to-day the poet's thickest and the most trustworthy friend; so much so that during the early days of Hafeez at Lahore it was rumoured that in reality, Pt. Hari Chand Akhtar wrote all poetry, and fiction; but got them published under the name of Hafeez. Nobody enjoyed the joke better than the two of them. And Hafeez's fame was then crossing the borders of his native Punjab.



## CHAPTER X

### COURT POET

**I**N the year 1925, the Poet's fame attracted a ruling prince, His Highness the Mir of Khairpur (Sind), who sent a message to Hafeez offering him the position of his Durbar Poet for three hundred rupees a month. Hafeez thought this offer would prove an end to his straitened circumstances for ever, allowing him to breathe with peace and tranquillity. After he had accepted the position Hafeez told Sir Abdul Qadir of his intention. Sir Abdul only said, "You are going my young friend, but in the courts nowadays, you cannot maintain your poetry. The gain is less while the loss is more."

Before the Poet left for this court, his mother fell ill which made him reluctant to leave her alone without any son to look after her, but in view of prospects of Hafeez's bright future she insisted on his

going, and leaving her under the most watchful eye of the Almighty. Eleven days after arriving at the Court Hafeez got a letter containing the most painful news of his mother's demise.

Alone and amongst strangers, miles away from Jullundur, Hafeez found himself plunged into a mock-world, the world of courtiers. They were a happy jocular crowd of people and he found it in his sorrow hard to laugh and make merry with them. The only sacred source of delight and pleasure was taken away from him. He had dreamt of the day when he would rise to a position which would enable him to give his mother the little pleasure and happiness, of which she had been deprived of. Now suddenly all seemed futile and aimless. His mother would not see him climbing the steps to fame, he would not see the look of pride in her eyes, truly her words came to pass, "One day you will be famous, but not in my life." And his dream remained a dream.

Hafeez wished to pay his last respects at his mother's grave, when he applied for leave the courtiers mocked at him saying,



“We are all motherless.”

At Khairpur, he wrote two poems, one an elegy on his mother and the other *Raqqasah* (The Nautch Girl).

The second poem which he wrote proved a milestone in his life. *Raqqasah* caused his dismissal from the court. In it the poet describes most artistically, in forceful language, the comparison of the social and moral life led at the courts and in an ordinary home of a Mussalman. Why he wrote this poem at all and why after its recitation he got his dismissal order—the explanation of it appears simple enough.

Hafeez was not willing to praise any thing against his conscience, even if he had become the Court Poet and had before him the chance of a comfortable life. Besides, the poetic genius which was always bursting in him for expression, it shows great moral courage which made him defy what might happen to him.

He recited his masterly satire depicting the degraded life of the Nautch girls at some Courts. Though the true vitality of the original is very difficult, indeed,

to convey in a translation, however, the translation runs thus :—

## NAUTCH GIRL

A rain has risen from the West  
And the booze-up season has arrived.  
A moon-faced fairy is dancing—  
What a coquettish, elegant, and graceful  
figure !

Yes, yes, go on singing and dancing  
Carry on piercing hearts with your looks,  
Go on captivating hearts  
O thou, the enemy of this world and the  
hereafter !

Your steps bring you favour  
Your blandishing movements are heart-  
conquering

You, bare-backed beloved,  
Stop, let us know who you are ?

O belle, are you from the East ?  
No your laugh is brazen and bold  
And cunning are your looks ;

O, how heart-burning is your vulgar speech  
How lusty is your artful simplicity—  
But surely, the daughters of Muslims  
Are chaste and modest :  
They are the princesses of beauty  
The adornment of Harems.  
They are the pride of society :  
The name of nobility lives through them.  
They share their husbands' burdens :  
And they never grumble  
Pure and chaste are they  
For they adhere to Islam.  
The treasure of piety and chastity  
Is the adornment of their beauty :  
Even the eyes of the sky  
Have not had a glimpse of them.  
They would rather die for their bashfulness  
and modesty  
But (O dancer) there is no modesty in you  
Neither love nor fidelity.

Before complete strangers  
Such magical coquetries are cheap.  
O immodest one, who are you ?  
Where is Honour ?  
Where is Modesty and Pride ?

From wherever thou art  
Cursed be that nation,  
Thou, the daughter of Satan,  
Begone, be damned, you wretched, unfor-  
tunate creature.

But stop...wait a little  
There is no fault of yours  
It is men who have become shameless.  
The nation's sense of honour has gone—  
Gone is the splendour of that nation  
Which was to be the Light of the Universe  
Gone is the Unity of Muslims  
Gone are the Emperors of Old India—  
Everything is now lifeless.

What are we? Nonentities.  
The power of our nation is no more,  
Our prowess has vanished.  
Where is that Arabian glory  
And the triumph of the Tartars?  
The Ghaznavid bravery has died out;  
The splendour of Babar is ended;  
The faith of Alamgir  
Has faded from the Muslim's heart.

The people have taken to ill deeds.  
We have become a nation of beggars.  
We are now in a different garb  
Wearing the cloak of immodesty,  
And the nation is now dying.  
In this game the pawn is about to be lost.  
What a tragedy!—this Hindustan,  
This orchard, symbolic of heavenly  
gardens.

A land of the Faithful  
A land of the God-fearing  
Will become barren again  
Will become the land of idolatry.

But what madness possesses me?  
Why am I so irrelevant in my speech?  
I am led away  
Whatever comes to my mouth, I utter it.  
I have become so intoxicated  
That I have lost wisdom and intelligence.  
What have I to do with the world?  
What have I to do with this dying away?  
What have I to do with Hindustan?  
What worry is there about Islam?  
Leave me alone, let me live,



Let me drink, let me be drunk—  
When the Day of Judgment comes  
It will be seen.

Yes, carry on singing and dancing,  
Carry on piercing hearts with your looks,  
Go on captivating  
O, thou, the enemy of this world and the  
hereafter.

Needless to say, his daring recital could have meant only one thing for Hafeez—Prison. And sure enough he saw it for three days. After his release from the “Court” the Poet Laureate went home.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE GARDEN OF SONGS

THE first thing Hafeez did on his return was to visit his mother's grave and pay her his last respects. Feeling very sad and lonely he returned to Lahore forgetting his poetry for several weeks.

Four months later Sir Abdul Qadir, then the Minister of Education in the Punjab, patronised an All-India Mushairah at Simla. Hafeez was invited by Sir Abdul Qadir and received as his own guest. The gathering was remarkable, due to the fact, that men of the highest rank representing all shades of opinion such as political leaders, Government officials, Litterateurs of all-India fame and the intelligentsia of the city attended it. During the journey from Lahore to Simla, which Hafeez undertook in the company of other poets, professional and amateur, all enjoyed themselves like a lot of

school boys going for a day's outing, at every big station merrily drinking tea, eating unscrupulously every thing eatable, regardless of its taste and hygienic condition. It affected Hafeez's throat very badly, making him unfit for reciting.

Sir Abdul Qadir felt it very badly on seeing his condition, and hearing the childish cause of the trouble, but still with a witty smile on his face, he said, "You are the bridegroom of the whole show, yet you have invited this trouble for yourself making any utterance from your mouth impossible, not to talk of a recital." However, medical aid was immediately sought, which gave a little relief to him but not complete recovery.

The proceedings of the symposium began, and the poets recited their compositions turn by turn. Naturally Hafeez was also asked to entertain the audience with his poetry. He made a justifiable excuse for his inability to recite, but unforgiving persistence of the audience did not excuse him. With the utmost difficulty he forced his throat to bring forth his melodious voice full of the sweet music of his

enchancing poetic expression which carried the message of his own heart to the heart of the people. It fascinated the audience and every couplet received generous applause and cheers, followed with fervent requests of "once more". His voice gradually improved. It seemed as if he was giving a new life to the poetic world. In spite of his inability to recite with a hoarse throat Hafeez could not escape without reciting at least a dozen of his poems. Now he was the acknowledged master of the day. His fame as a poetic genius spread with an amazing speed, illuminating the horizon of literature like a shining beam of the rising sun.

The public eagerly demanded his poems in a book form. But again the misfortune was that Hafeez did not have enough money to get them published. Various publishing agencies were approached, but with no results. Hafeez earnestly requested the proprietor of the publishing house in which he was working as a daily wage-earner, to advance him a sum of Rs. 100 only which was enough to make up the deficiency in the total amount calculated to be spent on the

printing and publishing of his works, but this request also met the same fate—a flat refusal. In the end, Hafeez mortgaged some household goods, and in the year 1925, he published his first book named *Naghma Zar*, “The Garden of Melodies”.

This book was acclaimed and appreciated very much by the progressive writers. Girami himself wrote a poem in appreciation of it, which was also appended to it. The Introduction of the book was written by Professor Ahmad Shah Bukhari “Petras”, now the Controller of All India Radio, a critic of accepted authority, in the course of which he says :

“A single careless stroke of his pen is enough to awaken the sleeping soul of music. He can summon at will all the beauties of nature, which appear before one’s eyes like adorable pictures and then gradually fade away into nothingness. One stroke at his Aolian lyre and, lo and behold, all the Graces clad in the rich trappings of poetry begin to dance before one’s eyes.

Hafeez lives and moves in a world of his own singing and playing melodies of welcome rains, of lightning in the midst of dark overhanging clouds, of the doleful cries of the peacock, and the wailings



of the cuckoo calling its mate, of the balmy zephyr and the hem of the beloved one's veil gently moved by the breeze, of wistful eyes dimmed by tears of a heart filled with longing and palpitating for the beloved one. When his heart becomes too heavy he sheds tears, when the pangs of separation from his beloved become too excruciating to be borne, he bursts into song of such exquisite delicacy that his hearers are touched to the quick.

This book is a small collection of his poetical works. But what are they? A few pages of exquisite poetry, in which matter-of-fact critics would pick holes dubbing them as faulty in technique and offending against the accepted principles of prosody. But those endowed by nature with a discerning mind and a feeling heart will realise how a devotee at the shrine of love can lose his foothold in the bottomless ocean of love and how the hearts of the onlookers respond to his uncertain steps.

Hafeez is not a matter-of-fact poet. He never follows the trodden path. He deliberately walks off the beaten track, off and anon, but his wanderings are not comparable to wanderings of one who has lost his way. His feet slip and his steps falter because he is intoxicated and is not master of himself. He drinks to his full from the cup of his poetry and makes others drunk. He not only gives a cup-full of wine to his hearers but tries to drown them in barrels of it. He is a care-free singer on whose lips words dance in ecstasy."

Numerous leading newspapers and journals also published very complementary comments on this book. In spite of all this the poets belonging to the old school of thought levelled scathing criticism against it, which expressed mostly their prejudiced mind and personal bias than an intrinsic defect in the poet's art.

During the period between 1925 and 1927, for nearly two years, Hafeez wrote for publishing houses on fixed remuneration. Collections of his poems appeared under the titles of *Bahar ke Phul* 'Spring Flowers,' *Phul Mala* 'The Chain of Flowers', and *Hindustan Hamara* 'Our India',—works which since then have become famous. The first two books are primarily meant for tiny tots and the last one contains the history of India in verse. This is meant for the older children. These books greatly impressed the educational authorities and proved valuable assets to vernacular libraries for children.

In the year 1927, Hafeez took up the position as the chief editor of a renowned monthly journal, the *Makhzan*. This maga-

zine played an important part in shaping his fortune and making his future brighter. It is necessary to mention here some details about the *Makhzan*.

This journal was started for the first time in the year 1900, Sir Abdul Qadir being its editor and proprietor. It was the premier Urdu journal of the Punjab. Sir Abdul served Urdu literature through this journal for over a decade. While on the one hand it contained articles written by the renowned masters of pen and authorities on literature, it proved to be the most useful organ for the training of young men who had an aptitude for literary pursuits. He encouraged them by publishing their works in his *Makhzan*.

The late Sir Mohammad Iqbal, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Chaudhri Khushi Mohammad Nazir, Mir Ghulam Bhik Nairang, Mir Ezaj Hussain, and Sayed Sajjad Haider were among the many famous and frequent contributors of this journal.

In 1904, Sir Abdul left for England to study for the Bar at Cambridge. During his stay there he constantly wrote and

regularly sent various interesting articles dealing with life in England. On his return to India in 1907, he again took charge of the *Makhzan* and continued so till 1911, when he found that he could not carry it along with his heavy professional work at the Bar. He then handed it over to a man who was not in a position to buy it but who was nevertheless interested in literature. The journal continued to go on smoothly until the Great War, when paper and printing became too expensive to pay for its publication. After the Great War the proprietor looked for a man who would prove himself capable enough to edit the *Makhzan* again and give it a new start.

Hafeez being the most capable hand, the famous poet and journalist was chosen by him in 1927. Now Hafeez became the editor of the same journal which, by coincidence of fate, had come into existence in the same year in which Hafeez himself was born!

He took up editing it, according to the stipulation, honorarily. It was to be so until the magazine began to yield profit.



All men of letters of Sir Abdul's time again gave their ready support and the personal influence of the poet also went a long way in making it a success. Although the magazine became self-supporting within a few months, Hafeez did not get any remuneration for full three years. The only source of his income was through the sale of his book, the *Naghma Zar*, and his financial worries continued to be as acute as ever.





## CHAPTER XII

### RISING STAR

THE All-India Muslim Educational Conference was going to be held in Madras in the year 1927. Hafeez also was invited to participate in it, because his presence was considered to be of great educational value. And on his arrival he was elected president of the All-India Mushaira. Sir Abdul Qadir was the president-elect of this educational conference. On their way back to the Punjab, the Poet and Sir Abdul stayed for some days at Hyderabad, Deccan.

Hyderabad, with its traditions of patronage to men of letters, gave them warm hospitality. His Exalted Highness, besides being considered to be the richest person in the world, enjoys the reputation of being a Poet of name. In spite of his being the ruler of the largest State in India, his mode of living is most simple. He has won unrivalled

fame in patronizing literary persons and literature in general. A great portion of his State-income is spent on public works. All of his subjects irrespective of caste, creed and colour have full confidence in him. A great many beneficent institutions even beyond the territories of the State owe their financial stability, to a great extent, to the generous help of His Exalted Highness.

The establishment of the Osmania University is a living proof of the interest which His Exalted Highness takes in Science, Literature, Art and Agriculture. This is the first and the only University of its kind in the whole of India which can safely claim to impart education in Urdu. A great many important works in foreign languages have been rendered in Urdu—indeed it has proved to be of the greatest service to the cause of Urdu literature.

An At Home was arranged by Nawab Fakhr Yar Jang Bahadur in honour of Sir Abdul Qadir, which was attended by the highest officials of this State, including the Prime Minister, His Excellency Maharaja Sir Kishan Parshad. Sir Abdul delivered a

speech on education on this occasion. His Excellency said to Sir Abdul that he had a poet travelling along with him and that they all would be pleased, should they be given a chance to listen to his recitation. Hafeez took it as a great honour done to him, particularly due to the fact that those were the words coming from Maharaja Sir Kishan Parshad—a most distinguished personality not only because he was the Prime Minister but also because he was a poet of great talents. After listening to Hafeez, the Prime Minister warmly expressed his desire to hear more. He said to Sir Abdul, “If you are in a hurry to go to the Punjab, do not take Hafeez away, leave him here for some time as we would like to hear more from him.” The reply was given with a smile. “Alright, your Excellency, but you have snatched from me the most delightful companion of my journey.”

Hafeez stayed on in Hyderabad for eleven days and during his stay he met a large number of people interested in Art and Literature. Two among them came very close to him. One was Nawab Masud Jang

the grandson of the well-known Muslim leader, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of the Muslim University, Aligarh. Nawab Masud Jang remained the poet's friend until his death in July 1937.

The poet's second friend was Nawab Sadar Yar Jang Bahadur who was the Chief of Religious Department in Hyderabad and also a noted writer in Urdu, Persian, and Arabic. Hafeez says, "I am very fortunate and lucky to have gained the friendship and admiration of these two of the most learned and able men of our time." Before Hafeez left Hyderabad, H. E. the Prime Minister gave to him a purse as a mark of appreciation, in keeping with the historic traditions of the Moghul period and expressed his profound admiration for Hafeez's poetry.

Now Hafeez was fast climbing the ladder of fame and his presence at All-India *Mushairas* had begun to be demanded by the people.

The Muslim University, Aligarh, holds a remarkable symposium annually, in which the best poets of India take part. Up to 1928 these great *Mushairas* represented only



the Lucknow school of poetry, and the poets belonging to the United Provinces considered the art of poetry as their exclusive monopoly. They severely criticised the Punjab poets and entertained a very misconceived notion. Many of the poets could not tolerate the increasing popularity of Hafeez in the Punjab.

However, in 1928, the date of the All-India Mushaira was announced, and invitations were sent to poets of repute. But none from the Punjab was invited. A party of influential students, which exercised a good deal of power, insisted upon the president of the *Mushaira* inviting Hafeez Jullunduri also. The President promptly presented a financial excuse, showing his inability to bear the travelling expenses of Hafeez. Whereupon this party of students became responsible for his expenses and an invitation was sent to him.

Hafeez, always conscious of the dignity of his art, now spurned the invitation. On this Mr. Zahirul Islam who was one of the great admirers of Hafeez's art and also his pupil in poetry, sent a telegram to Hafeez

requesting him to attend the *Mushaira* for the sake of the young students who were so enthusiastic about him and appreciated the style of Hafeez so much that in anticipation of Hafeez's arrival they had challenged the local poets who belonged to the old school to measure their standard against his.

Hafeez reached Aligarh. The proceedings of the *Mushaira* commenced in the evening. Distinguished poets, and aged masters participated.

It was customary with the old *Mushairas* that every poet had to recite the poem on the set *misra*. If any poet could not compose on that *misra* he had no right to be included in the programme. This tradition was strictly observed. The Punjab had already given up these unnecessary customs and there the poet was given full option to recite his masterpiece. Hafeez accordingly attended the *Mushaira* under the same impression and had no poem with him composed on the set *misra*. Therefore, Hafeez, although he took his seat on the dias, was not on the list of the night's programme.

Numerous poets came in, turn by turn.

It was about two o'clock at dead of night when suddenly a roar of shouts, "Hafeez, Hafeez, Hafeez," burst out of the calm and quiet atmosphere prevailing in the hall. The President with his conspicuous personality got over the situation with the utmost difficulty, by assuring the audience that he would very soon request Hafeez to entertain them with his poem, although in doing so he would be violating the customary rules of the *Mushaira*, because Hafeez had not come prepared to recite on the set *misra*.

He also made the whole position clear in unequivocal words when he said: "Under the circumstances there are only two alternatives. Either I must respect the sentiments of the house and ask Hafeez to recite regardless of tradition, which I hope the other honoured poets will not mind, or I shall have to adjourn the meeting. For it is quite impossible for me to allow the continuance of this disturbance." Thereupon Hafeez was called upon to recite. He stood up amidst continuous applause and cheers and informed the audience that although he could not write on the proposed *misra* as the

*misra* was not known to him in time, he would, however, recite a poem on the set topic, "The Poet's Aim."

When the audience had become tired of listening to the same old thought, worded in different forms, Hafeez animated the whole atmosphere, evoking intense enthusiasm. He then recited one of his very sweet poems, "The Angel's Song," and swept the whole house off its feet. The spell of the old poets was over.

Now 'Hafeez' was on the tongue of every one present and the request of 'once more' was incessant, when the President at last said, "I honour your sentiments, gentlemen. I myself have the desire of listening to him until the whole of his treasure of poems is exhausted; but in view of the very short time at our disposal and the number of poets remaining still on the list, it seems impossible and even unfair on my part to request Hafeez to recite any more. However I propose something that will please you all—tomorrow in the Strachey Hall, we shall arrange a special gathering where Hafeez alone will entertain us all with his original, realistic



and impressive thoughts and I hope Hafeez would oblige us all by accepting our proposal." This announcement decided the day, resulting in a shattering defeat for the old school of poetry which aimed simply at playing on words, their sounds and diverse uses, totally divorced from any deep thoughts and educative value.

Hafeez stayed at Aligarh for about a week and attended various gatherings specially arranged in his honour. The professors and students all acknowledged the beauty and simple style of Hafeez, and this immensely encouraged him.

Again and again, at meeting after meeting, he was asked to recite "The Angel's Song" with which he had won the day at the All-India Mushaira :

### AN ANGEL'S SONG

Behold the spectacle of that world  
 In the strings of my harp  
 In the colourful land of my songs.  
 In the river of Slumber there exists a  
 bubble-like world,



That world the people call dream-land.  
Behold the spectacle of that world,  
Delicate and light, dear and sweet,  
In the strings of my harp  
In the colourful land of my songs.  
What is life ? 'Tis a sweet dream.  
What is that dream ? 'Tis sweet love,  
"Sweet Love" is my song.  
In my sweet songs lies all that is life,  
Sweet are my songs, sweet is life.  
What is life ? 'Tis a sweet dream  
Dwelling in the heart, hidden from the eye.  
What is that dream ? 'Tis sweet love,  
"Sweet Love" is my song.

## CHAPTER XIII

### EPIC POET

**H**AFAEEZ wrote many poems on the Prophet. From the beginning of his career both his heart and brain have been infused with love for him. What he wrote on the coming of the Prophet stands out as one of his best pieces :

#### THE COMING OF THE PROPHET

Life was a dead mass, its spirit was drooping,  
The incompleteness of Creation grieved at its own  
futility.  
Human soul had not yet tasted the full delights of  
prayer,  
Human lips did not yet know the pleasures of  
supplications sent to Heaven.  
All of a sudden Happiness took birth in the House  
of Hope,  
And a new life came into the life of the world.  
There arose a shout that the last of the Prophets  
is born,



The year 1928 stands as a landmark in the Poet's career. In that year Hafeez started the chief work of his life, *Shah-nama-i-Islam*.

At the time of starting this book he lived in a small house in which he had only a tiny room for his office. The house stood in a dirty little street. Hafeez looks back on this street with disgust. He often recollects the exact picture of that locality and sees again in his mind's eye the sanitary conditions tolerated by the municipality—the main water drain regularly collecting all rubbish and dirt and ever supplying to the residents the most disgusting and evil odour, quite *gratis* ; the mud and slime amassed on the roadside, generously emanating the germs of typhoid and other diseases. It seemed as if these were special arrangements made on medical advice to keep the people immune from obnoxious things like fresh air, clean roads and sweet smells. A filthy-smelling drain of this kind still encircles the old city of Lahore.

In these surroundings lived the poet who was destined to be recognised as the Firdausi of his times, as the author of the great epic

of Islam.

What an imagination the poet must have possessed then to have conceived the idea of this epic poem, *Shahnama-i-Islam*, the history of the great heroes of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad (God's grace be upon him).

He is perhaps the first poet in the thirteen hundred years of the history of Islam who ever ventured to combine historic facts with poetic talent, and write this *magnum opus*. Indeed an impossibility to attempt, it would appear to the common man. This mighty venture of Hafeez sobered his opponents and made him more popular in the circle of religious-minded people. As a matter of fact the *Shahnama* goes a long way towards giving Hafeez the position and prestige which he is fortunate in enjoying to-day.

The poet now found himself working in three directions. Editing the *Makhzan*, working for the publishing houses, and the *Shahnama*. He had to give up one. To drop the proposal of *Shahnama* was out of the question. He felt as if some strong inner



force was dictating to him to carry on with this great work.

Hafeez then decided to refuse to take work from publishing houses and kept his position as editor on the *Makhzan*. In doing this he could save more time for *Shahnama*. But he gave up his means of earning a steady income. Now the only source left was the sale of his book *Naghma Zar*. Hafeez did not mind being penniless and hungry. The idealism of his great undertaking sustained him and he saw before him a bright future and prosperity. His faith and belief in God was strong; he was confident that in doing so he was rendering a great service to the cause of his religion and community. So he felt solace in sacrificing his own comfort for this great work.

When Hafeez declared his decision to devote his intellect and labour to this hard and heavy work contemporary poets laughed and said, "Hafeez has gone mad, he is spoiling his talent and gift for poetry. This work is too big." Only one friend stood by him. He is a great litterateur and he knew what the worth of Hafeez's

attempt was. Khwaja Hasan Nizami is an eminent prose-writer and a pious Muslim ; he encouraged Hafeez in his undertaking and also gave him a little financial help. Through him Hafeez paid his second visit to Hyderabad. Hafeez and his friend were guests of H. E. Maharaja Sir Kishan Parshad.

Although the Poet had so far only written two chapters of his book, he found his attempt was already a much talked-about topic. Hafeez stayed for eight days at Hyderabad and recited several pieces from these chapters. The English and Urdu papers gave him generous publicity. His own recitations won the appreciation of the Muslims and proved a great force for canvassing help. Even this did not convince the contemporary poets of his success. Why ? Because he was the first man to attempt such a composition and the idea was too new for the old ways of thought.

Khawja Hasan Nizami tried to get help for the Poet from Hyderabad, but he was not successful. He then tried with several prominent people but they also unfortunately

felt that Hafeez even with their help would not succeed in writing this book. He then left Hyderabad somewhat disappointed in people but with a firm resolve to pursue his plan quite unaided.

On the way back, he broke his journey at Bhopal, where he stayed as the guest of the Ruler's nephews, Prince Saeeduzzafar Khan and Prince Rasheeduzzafar Khan. The two princes are both brilliant men and take a keen interest in poetry. During his short stay there the princes' treatment towards him was not only friendly but almost brotherly. Needless to say, his poetry in general and *Shahnama* in particular was the topic of the day.

On his return to Lahore, Hafeez tried to settle down and finish the first volume of *Shahnama*, but he found many interruptions in his way such as attending meetings and *Mushairas*. To seek seclusion, he returned to Jullundur and finished his first volume. Now it was ready, to get money for its publication was the urgent question. Hafeez approached his father asking him for help, in permitting him to sell his house.

The Poet's father did not tolerate even listening to such an absurd idea. He also doubted the sales value of the book.

Though Hafeez had succeeded in writing a volume of the great epic, he could not convince his own father that the book could yield money. Publishers also refused to have any transaction with him, leaving Hafeez with only one alternative—an appeal to the public.

Being editor of the *Makhzan*, he took the opportunity of placing before the public his true position and, by inserting some extracts from *Shahnama*, requested the customers to book advance orders and offered a reduced price should they pay the price of the volume in advance. In this way the Poet hoped to raise enough money to print and publish *Shahnama-i-Islam*. He was very surprised when he received his first postal money order : the name of the sender Chaudhari Niaz Ali Khan will always be remembered by the Poet. Eight days followed and no other sum was received. Hafeez was thinking of returning that money, when more money orders began to



pour in. The appeal was enthusiastically responded to by the Muslims and within two months he collected three thousand rupees, enabling him to print and publish four thousand copies of *Shahnama*. Hafeez was the people's poet and once again it was the public which had come to his rescue. Hafeez set to work, bought his own material and gave it to the printers with his manuscript. He got the book nicely printed and bound. Now it was quite ready for the people.



## CHAPTER XIV

### FOOTLIGHTS OF FAME

**S**HAHNAMA-I-ISLAM, on appearance, began to make history. Men of letters hailed it as a monumental work, and men of money opened their purses to help the Poet.

Captain Malik Mumtaz Mohammad Khan Tiwana of the Indian Army met Sir Abdul Qadir and expressed a desire to meet the author of *Shahnama-i-Islam*. Consequently, the year 1929 saw Hafeez again in Simla, as the honoured guest at an At-Home, given by Captain Malik Mumtaz Mohammad Khan Tiwana.

The "At-Home" was attended by many Hindu and Muslim leaders amongst whom were the late Sir Fazl-i-Husain, the late Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, Sir Shahab-ud-din, Raja Narendra Nath, Sir Abdul Qadir and Sir Feroz Khan Noon. After the tea was over, the host made a speech and said that they

were all gathered together to meet a young man who had in a few years gained a great name as a poet and shone like a star. He also expressed his surprise at finding Hafeez so young. The mental picture he had of his guest was far different from what he saw. And he was pleased to see that the poet was a young man with useful years ahead of him to enable him to finish the great epic. The friendly appreciation of the host did not stop at mere words. After Hafeez had recited from his book, very tactfully the generous host made an offer of one thousand rupees for one copy of the Poet's book.

Several guests followed his example by buying copies for one or two hundred rupees each. Hafeez experienced a deep emotion of profound pleasure at seeing such an unexpected exhibition of generosity. He got much encouragement and felt a great burden being lifted off his shoulders. He found himself able to breathe with satisfaction.

Several months later the Poet visited Quetta where he stayed with a friend for some days. On his return home he stopped at Lahore to write some poems for the

children's weekly, *The Phul*. This paper was read by his own children and he wrote a special poem for it referring to his eldest daughter. In writing this poem, the poet thought of the amusement that he would get by teasing her through this paper and giving her his reply to her remarks in the next issue. But alas ! she did not live to read it. A tragedy was overshadowing the poet's life. On reaching home he witnessed a heart-rending scene. The house he had rented for his family had a well in the courtyard. His daughter went to draw water and slipped into it. When she was rescued, it was too late. She did not survive the shock. This caused a great mental shock to him which told very badly upon his health. In her he had lost his first-born child. And had she been alive to-day she would have been a young woman of twenty.

He could not concentrate on his work. He then left Jullundur with his wife and family and returned to Lahore, where he found difficulty in renting a house.

On the outskirts of Lahore, there is Model Town, the first garden city to be built in

India. The Poet intended renting a house there, but there was none to let. The Secretary of the Model Town Co-operative Society suggested he should build a house of his own, by fulfilling the conditions of the Model Town Society. Hafeez then got his own plot of land on instalments and spent all his ready money on building a small house. Each member who joined the scheme was given by the Society promises which were not being fulfilled and many disturbances were caused as the result of it all. The founder of Model Town, Diwan Khem Chand, was Secretary of the Managing Committee; he also expressed his helplessness to improve matters, in the teeth of opposition from some members. Hafeez felt all the while that the Committee had not given the people the promised amenities. He then started a paper, *Karzar* (Battle), and used it as a medium for acquainting the people with the real situation prevailing in the Model Town Society. For nearly four years his time was wasted in this controversy which came to a close after fighting in the High Court where Hafeez finally won his case.



In 1932, His Highness the Nawab of Bahawalpur, a brilliant ruling prince, descended from the Abbasside Caliphs, of Baghdad, having a great regard for Hafeez and appreciation for the *Shahnama*, arranged for the poet to attend his court, making it compulsory only three times a year on the two Ids, and the ruler's birthday Durbar.

In the midst of all his literary pursuits and civic activities, the Poet was concentrating his best energies on the real work which demanded his love and his intellect. The fruit of that labour appeared in the shape of the second volume of *Shahnama-i-Islam*. It was published in 1933.

In the same year appeared the second book of his collected poems under the meaningful title of *Soz-o-Saz*—"Flame and Music". This book contains all songs, romantic and natural, composed by him between the years 1925 and 1933. The preface to it was written by Pandit Hari Chand Akhtar, M.A. in which he, critically estimating Hafeez's poetry, says :

"The author of *Shahnama-i-Islam* and *Naghmazar* no longer stands in need of the services of an ex-



perienced and long-winded usher to cry "oyez-oyez" before him to announce his arrival. It is no doubt one of the well-established and accepted conventions of civilized society that a new arrival and a stranger has to be introduced to those present, therefore, when Hafeez as a poet first arrived, the ritual of introduction was duly performed, in 1925. When *Naghmazar*, the first collection of his poems, was published, some appreciative introductory verses were written by the late poet-laureate Maulana Gرامي. Professor A. S. Bokhari "Petras" also paid homage by way of a preface.

The work and style of a poet can be judged from the appreciation he gets in his own times, and the promise which he shows of finding a permanent place in the gallery of poetic artists.

From 1923 onwards, since Hafeez began to depict natural scenery and to give an expression to his sentiments in the small musical metres, giving a local colour to rhythm and rhyme, you are sure to find in any Urdu magazine that you may pick up, and in any poetical symposium that you may attend, quite a number of poets following in the footsteps of Hafeez. The majority of those who try to imitate Hafeez, not being endowed with natural aptitude, fail miserably and make themselves the laughing stock of the discerning and critical public; but here we are not concerned with the fact whether the imitation is a success or a failure.

But if imitation is really the best way of apprecia-

tion then it cannot be denied that the new style of Hafeez enjoys the undisputed position of being the pioneer and has acquired for itself a permanent and prominent place in Urdu literature. On the one hand learned and eminent critics find themselves compelled to pay Hafeez the tribute due to an inventor and a creator, and on the other hand the contemporary poetic luminaries have been carried off their feet by the new "whirlwind"...Even those pillars of conservatism who, for reasons best known to themselves, used to cry down Hafeez's inventions, are now imitating him for the sake of their existence in the world of literature.

## CHAPTER XV

### POET'S PILGRIMAGE

**H**IS HIGHNESS THE NAWAB OF BAHAWALPUR went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina in the year 1935. His Highness invited Hafeez to accompany him. The Poet accepted the invitation, and regarded it as a gift from God. It had been the Poet's greatest desire to make this holy pilgrimage, so much so that in the year 1926 he wrote a "Salaam" to the Prophet. Hafeez had sent this "Salaam" through a friend, who was visiting Mecca and Medina at the time, and felt convinced that the invitation from His Highness was the answer to his prayer.

At Karachi there were many of the Poet's admirers to see him off. They all shared his joy in taking this sacred journey to the holy land. The congregation at the quay-side requested the Nawab of Bahawalpur to ask Hafeez to recite his famous poem "Mera

Salaam Leja.” He was deeply moved by this request and Hafeez from the deck of the ship *Rahmani* recited to the audience—the quay-side full of many of his true and sincere admirers, the ship in the background with the Poet on the deck, his eyes full of tears, his voice shaking with compassion for all those who saw in him the true spokesman of their own inner feelings. As he recited “Mera Salaam Leja” the sincerity and the reverent note of his poem seemed to excite the tender emotions of nature, for these ten minutes even the crude song of the sea gulls stopped. What an atmosphere! This was one of the most dramatic happenings and remains one of the most cherished memories in the Poet’s life.

Some of the stanzas of this unique prayer are :

### TAKE MY SALUTATIONS !

On the firmament of good fortune,  
on the forehead of the Pleiades, thy  
star has shone. To that threshold  
thou hast been called, O fortune’s  
friend ! O Destiny’s favourite !

Thy cherished hopes are about to be realised ; the star of thy good fortune is in the ascendent and beckons thee to come and be honoured by the Holy Presence.

O Speck of Love ! go and become the Sun, for thou art going to the Darbar of the Holy One.

Prepare thyself for the journey.  
God be with thee, O traveller to Yathrib. I have just one message to give.  
Convey my salaams to the August One.

Remember my deep sighs and my waiting eyes. But you need not say anything about my condition. He knows and understands everything ; my heart yearns and longs for the sight of Him. I enjoin thee to keep thy peace. Thine eyes may see but thy lips shall remain sealed

My lamentations and prayers have lost their fervour and my longings their ecstasy. My heart—not only has it ceased to sing, but it is also broken. That intoxicating cup is now empty. Go, bring it refilled from the tavern of faith, with the spark that faith alone can kindle, for that is the best intoxicant. Thou



wilt quench thy thirst at the fount of faith.  
With folded hands, I pray, bring back  
some of that wine for me in this goblet,  
chipped and broken though it is. I know  
thou art going a long way, yet take this  
goblet with thee, and convey my salaams  
to Him.

These eyes which once vied with torrents  
in shedding tears have now dried up. From  
where can a river flow now, when my eyes cry  
in vain even for a tear? For long I had  
cherished the hope of making a canoe of my  
heart, so that I might carry thee, O  
traveller, to Yathrib, to the shores of the  
world eternal. But enough of this.  
Go, my courageous friend, for it is  
getting late. I wish you a safe journey.  
Pray convey my heartfelt love, my homage  
and my salaams to the Loved One.

The audience was filled with feelings of  
gratitude, and after the recitation was over,  
there came spontaneous applause and  
shouts of "Hafeez Zinda-bad, Zinda-bad,  
Hafeez" (Hafeez live long, long live Hafeez).

This eventful send-off coupled with a keen  
longing for visiting the holy land made the  
Poet's journey thrilling and joyful. Hafeez  
now yearned to pay his homage to the Holy

Prophet personally since his first "Salaam" was sent through another person. During his journey to Medina he wrote another "Salaam". On his arrival at Medina he left the party for some time. Away from every body, he filled the calm air with his melodious voice and gave his Salaam to the Prophet!

Here Hafeez found himself suddenly enriched by the unique treasure of composure and peace of heart. It seemed to him as if he had already seen the place and was fully confident in directing the party.

During his stay in Medina, Hafeez met many Indians who had settled down there and found that his *Shahnama* and other works had reached them long before he ever thought of his Fate taking him on this pilgrimage.

On being introduced to the Arabian public as "Hafeez Jullunduri, the author of *Shah nama-i-Islam*" Hafeez was called an impostor. And in support of this allegation they gave a full description of the "real Hafeez" who possessed a long flowing beard of about two feet (!) and generally presented an appearance as if he had walked straight

out of the medieval age. Hafeez had too much sense of humour to feel perturbed over it. And, later on, when he had the pleasure of meeting the impostor, he asked him why he had impersonated him. The answer he received was : “ Well, I saw a way of getting money and knowing that you would not mind it, I saw no harm in impersonating you for that purpose.”

There were many meetings held during his stay at Medina. At one of these meetings he made a collection for the orphans of Medina. After twenty-one days the Poet left for Mecca where he performed the Haj.

At Mecca Hafeez met His Majesty Jalal-ul-Mulk Sultan Ibn-i-Saud and presented him with his *Shahnama*. Hafeez stayed at Mecca for twenty days. When the time for his departure came he wept bitterly ; he was reluctant to leave as he felt the holy land was his home. The Poet had written about it in his *Shahnama*. His imagination of the place only proved to him that Medina and Mecca were not new to his eyes.

After forty-one days of peace and solitude Hafeez returned home to attend to his

manifold responsibilities.

The hand of death had long ago swept away his brothers leaving their widows and children to be looked after by Hafeez. He felt himself under a moral obligation to help them, which he did by giving them an allowance each month. In doing so his life became burdened with worries. And to this he returned.

Sorrow-stricken, Hafeez sang with ecstasy of love as the highest expression of the human mind. One of his very famous songs 'The Soul' has been sung and also translated by the celebrated Bengal musician Mr. Dilip Kumar Roy. I am indebted to him, for this translation.

### THE SOUL

House in thy soul the unflickering lamp of love,  
O way-lost dupe, relume the olden flame  
In the wistful temple of dream. Nurse in faith's grove  
The memorial rose of peace no thorn can shame.

Delivered from thy passions' lurid gleams  
And shadowing greeds, foes in the guise of friends,  
Know : in the deep of hush the soul redeems :  
She is the vanguard morn to darkness sends.



Her children in gloom, thy Motherland mourns and  
sighs,

Play Beauty's flute, like Krishna : thou art He.  
If thou wilt wake, the world, aquiver, shall rise  
And mitred priests of love will sing with thee.

Hate never pays, though sorrows purify,  
Be poised in thy Self of love : incarnate, free.  
If she resigns, who shall reveal the sky ?  
Soul's night is defeat : her dawn——sure victory.

Be pledged to noble ways ——of the ancient Sun,  
If lose thou must, let it be life ——not love.  
Shall clouds besiege thy star-dominion ?  
“ Up ! time is fleeting ” ——the clarion calls above.

His Highness the Nawab of Tonk invited Hafeez in the year 1936 to attend his court. He was entertained as a State guest and His Highness greatly enjoyed his visit and appreciated his art. There the titles of “ Malikushshoara ” and “ Hassanulmulk Bahadur ” were conferred upon him.

When Hafeez returned home with these honours, the learned and literary men of Jullundur met and passed a resolution thanking the ruler of Tonk for his patronage and encouraging the cause of Urdu poetry by thus honouring one of their luminaries. The



Poet was, in the year 1934, given the title of "Khan Sahib" by the Government.

In the beginning of 1937, Hafeez suffered a great deal from a whitlow on the right thumb, necessitating an urgent operation. Through this, his work began to suffer seriously. The operation however resulted in disfiguring the thumb. For nearly ten months Hafeez suffered from this very painful trouble. And at one point it was thought necessary even to amputate the arm, but fortunately a Hakim arrived on the scene in time and, opposing the amputation, he recommended an ointment. That slowly took the Poet on the road to recovery.

While he was still convalescing, one very noble friend of the Poet called him to Delhi, in fact forced him out of his sick bed. On his arrival at Delhi, this friend dosed him with aspirins and told him that he had promised the public a recitation from Hafeez. After reciting for an hour and a half he fainted from sheer fatigue and weakness.

Soon after Hafeez was invited by some friends to join them in Kashmir to recuperate. Once more he was forced to



But autumn-stricken is the tree of mankind.  
Human buds are colourful, but alas, they are  
withered.

They are like sparks choked under ashes  
Shadowed by helplessness is the face of everyone,  
young and old.

On one side there are the visitors, healthy, happy  
and well-clad,  
On the other the hosts, the starving Kashmiris,  
pictures of destitution.

The visitors taste wines and delicious fruits, smell  
the fragrance of flowers

While for the labourers of Kashmir hunger and  
thirst are the wages of ceaseless toil :

One is a merry-making sight-seer, and the other is  
the son of Kashmir.

This garden is reserved for the pleasures of rich  
visitors

Its fruit is sweet to strangers because it is bitter to  
its own people.

Life exists here only as a path to death.

Mothers give birth to children only for slavery.

Each breath is only a continuation of imprisonment  
without chains.

Can't you now understand why this waterway is  
restless,

Why these waterfalls are beating their heads on the  
ground,





Even the trampled grass feels inspired, proud, and  
self-adoring.  
Colour and perfume too have found a path to fame.

Behold the musicians and the players come with  
their accompaniment,

Behold them coming like a hushed song.

Behold the guards arrive at the garden gate,

And Jehangir, the Emperor, with the halo of the

“Chain of Justice” himself comes inside.

Once more the gates open. A breath of Spring  
comes in.

A green mantle has descended on the scene,

Serenity also, wearing a hundred veils.

Lo, Nur Jehan too has come

Escorted by intellect, culture, and statesmanship.

They leave the scene, and, like fragrance, enter the  
blossoms and the flowers.

Now, Shah Jehan Sahibkoran has entered the garden.

Strict, just, powerful and kind

Followed by kingly success, elegance and glory,

With his architects and master-craftsmen.

A revered person is strolling in the garden.

There are resounding cries of “God is Great”

There are shouts of “Emperor Alamgir”

His austerity transcending everything, throne, fort-

tune, victory,

The Koran before him, and the sword in his hand.



There is a strange dim light and bright darkness in  
the garden.

Each bed of flowers is surrounded with angels

No one cares now for you or me

They who laid out this garden are here :

They fear neither molestation nor persecution.

Finally, in the concluding stanzas he strikes a grand note of social protest against an order of society which perpetuates Poverty, Hunger and Exploitation :

Life may be a short span

And the grandeur of the Moghals transitory.

But even old buildings have new lessons :

They are the footprints of fleeting Time

They reveal the Secret of Change.

The wealthy scorn the Kashmiris to-day

They call them cheats, liars, and cunning fellows.

But cowardice, diffidence, poverty, and helplessness

This comes from centuries of subjection and

exploitation :

And so much of it was there to cause degradation.

The graves of the mighty and broken palaces,

Rusted arms and broken wine goblets

The grand ruins which make you sad, my friend,

They are but the bones of the workers and the blood  
of the peasant,

They symbolise the spoliation of mankind, the best  
creation of God.  
This is another aspect of the picture of Kashmir.

This poem he recited at a grand *Mushaira*, lasting for two sittings. In writing this poem there was a second thought in the Poet's mind which can be seen in the dedications to Sheikh Mohammad Abdulla, and Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz wishing thereby a strong unity between the Muslims and the Hindus. The Poet's idealism has been truly evaluated by the great literary critic of our times, Sir Ross Masud, who wrote in his introduction :—

“My Hafeez is neither a preacher nor a political propagandist. He neither meddles with politics nor does he sermonise.

I love Hafeez's style. His simple and effective poetry produces in me a feeling in which I get entirely lost but cannot exactly describe in words. Whenever I read him, I am convinced that of all the notable Urdu poets whom I know, he is the only one about whom I can say with confidence that he in his field of work confines himself to the interpretation of what he sees and feels,

and in this field none equals him.

Hafeez's heart is like a palace of mirrors. The world in all its variety has come to visit it in different forms and sounds. Joy and sorrow, good and bad, sometimes together, sometimes separately, come here and see themselves reflected. They smile, frown, feel vain and pull faces. In this they laugh uproariously as well as sigh and sob. This poet of mine sometimes gets lost in this atmosphere. Sometimes expressions of longings, sometimes of admiration come from his lips —Such is Hafeez's poetry !

Varied colours and sounds of contemporary life pass through the mind of every poet. But every mind is not a palace of mirrors, nor is every poet a Hafeez.

Perhaps sometimes he gets annoyed at the turmoil and intrusion of these visitors, because whenever they force themselves on him they refuse to leave him even when they are not wanted, neither do they melt like tears nor can they be laughed out. The Poet gets angry, they then all try to shake his soul and trample over him. The Poet moans and groans and screams for rescue.

These are the verses of my Hafeez. Reflections of what he sees. Echoes of songs. Footprints of passing ideas and impressions. Some casual, some very deep. All gay and colourful.

I have seen Kashmir myself, and now the "Picture of Kashmir" drawn by Hafeez is before my eyes, and I think that the way Hafeez has seen and felt, I too had seen and felt the same way. But the idea that I had also seen with the same eyes and had felt alike came to my mind only when I saw Hafeez's "Picture of Kashmir." Not to talk of Hafeez alone, I think all the great poets of the world have this great faculty in them, of so expressing their impressions and emotions, that everyone who sees and feels takes their impressions and emotions as his own."

## CHAPTER XVI

### PASTURES NEW

WITH Hafeez's literary star in the ascendant, recognition was coming from all quarters of India. And in 1937, His Exalted Highness The Nizam's Government acknowledged the real value of the Poet's epic work *Shahnama-i-Islam*, and sanctioned a sum of three hundred rupees a month as an allowance for a period of three years.

The ordeal of the past year coupled with the heavy burden which he carried, made the Poet a victim to a nervous breakdown. He was advised by the doctor and encouraged by Sir Abdul Qadir to visit Europe where he could find rest and escape from his disturbing admirers. He sailed for England in February 1938. On his arrival in England the Poet found some of his old friends and made many more with his charm and ease



of manner. Although he could not speak a word of English he felt comfortable in his new surroundings.

It was his intention to take complete rest in England but here again he found none. During his first two months, various Indian organisations arranged meetings in his honour welcoming him to England and expressing their great delight in finding in their midst one whom they had idolised through their love of his poetry.

“On April 9, the Muslim Society of Great Britain organised a reception for him at Eccleston Square, S. W. 1. The guests, who had started pouring in at 4 P.M. had reached such an unprecedented number by the time fixed that the officers of the Society began to find great difficulty to arrange and accommodate the crowd in the limited space at their disposal,” wrote the weekly *Muslim Gazette* of London. It only goes to prove how popular and well-known Hafeez and his works had become in England. There were many English Muslims at these meetings, who could not understand the Poet’s language but nevertheless were

enchanted by his sweet and melodious voice.

It was during Easter that he was invited to Glasgow at the launching of the ship *El Hind*. The Poem he had written for the occasion was heard amid cheers.

It ran :

Begin thou thy voyage  
To India and Arabia ;  
And be a link of association  
Between India and Britain.  
Thou art a star of the East,  
Give light to the West,  
Following the example of the  
Sun and Moon,  
Light thou thy Eastern torch,  
And weigh the Anchor, O Sailor.

The news of thy coming  
Will please the Haj pilgrims,  
For thee is destined  
An atmosphere of sanctity,  
As thy deck will resound  
With the pilgrims' shouts of  
"Allah-o-Akbar," "God is Great."  
The echo of their shouts  
Will go to the Seventh Heaven.  
Weigh the Anchor, O Sailor.

The National League for Empire Friendship had Hafeez to recite at a luncheon

arranged by them. It was reported by the weekly *Great Britain and the East*, "He impressed the audience greatly by his poems."

The Home Press was as interested in Hafeez's work abroad as was the foreign press in reporting his movements.

*The Times of India* published some accounts of his activities in England :

"The President and members of the Hindustani Union were at-home to visitors from India. The most interesting feature of the proceedings was the reading of three Urdu poems, which were composed in London by Hafeez Abul Asar Jullundhari, who is one of the most sought-after persons in the Indian Colony. His poems are beautifully composed and he reads them in a melodious singing voice. Since the death of Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, Hafeez Abul Asar Jullundhari is regarded as the leading Urdu poet of India to-day."

This appeared on the 2nd July, 1938 in *The Times of India*, Bombay.

One of the most admired Poems which he recited there was "In Our Homeland" Here are some extracts :

## IN OUR HOMELAND

In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.  
 Its garden is the envy of Eden.  
 Flowers are there and those dressed in Flowers—  
 Tender of body—their mouths like buds—  
 Their gait like *Leila*, their words sweet like *Shirin*.  
 That garden, even in its desolation, is inferior to none.  
 Enjoy its sights, therefore, for ever—  
 In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.

\*                      \*                      \*

In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.  
 Beauty and the admiring gaze  
 Quietly watching one another,  
 There is love, there is desire, there are gaities and  
marriage feasts.  
 All these, they are there also—  
 Have you not seen those charming nights  
 When a bride and a bridegroom talk to one another,  
 When buds open into blossoms and when stars laugh—  
 In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.

\*                      \*                      \*

In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.  
 Wonderful are the days and nights of our homeland,  
 The Moon and the Sun, those orbs of light—  
 Our streams flowing with the elixir of life—  
 Our mountains which are the highest in the world,  
 The beautiful gardens and the blue skies,

Our flowers and our stars—  
They are all waiting for you and me—  
In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.

\* \* \*

In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.  
Those simple mothers of children,  
The waving of whose veils brings breaths of cool breeze,  
Whose dark tresses are like the dark clouds of the  
rainy season.

How long will you be forgetful of their fidelity ?  
How long will you do them injustice ?  
On whose support have you left them to depend ?  
In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.

\* \* \*

In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.  
The glances of innocent children full of simplicity,  
In whose shelter the heart seeks comfort—  
With what longing they are waiting for you—  
Those hot tears, those cold sighs,  
Whether you wish or not,  
Will beckon you one day to go to your home.  
In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.

\* \* \*

In our homeland there is everything, my dear one,  
What pictures meet your eye !  
See Mysore in the South and Kashmir in the North,



Interpretations of the Dream of Paradise.  
 Look at the charming *Taj*, the Crown of Architecture.  
 Look then at your own neglect,  
 Your own treasures you have forgotten.  
 In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.

\*                      \*                      \*

In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.  
 There is the man of wealth, inebriated by his riches—  
 There is the labourer like a dead man, in his shroud.  
 There is the sweet sound of the flute  
 Resounding once more in the forest of Gokal  
 On the banks of the river Jumna—  
 In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.

\*                      \*                      \*

In our homeland there is everything, my dear one,  
 The Present is promising more than the Past,  
 Knowledge and Art now abound.  
 There is Tagore's music with its magic of Bengal  
 And the pride of the Punjab, the miraculous Song of  
Iqbal,  
 And this wayfarer, wandering and down-trodden.  
 They are worth seeing, worth seeing are they all.  
 In our homeland there is everything, my dear one.

It was in November 1937, nearly four months before the Poet sailed for England, in London that I happened to hear for the

first time some of his poems. The beauty of one poem particularly struck me with great force. Incidentally, it was the first Urdu poem that I had ever heard. The language was entirely strange to me but there was something sweeping about the poem "Jaag Soz-i-Ishq Jaag" that made me want to recite and understand it. I often found myself thinking of it and wanting to hear it. To me, it appeared as if it was inspired by deep pathos in the mind of the Poet. Since I showed keen interest in his poems, I too was invited to attend the meeting at Eccleston Square. I wanted very much to meet the Poet, but being an absolute stranger to that society, I felt rather awkward going to a gathering of strange people. So, instead of accepting the invitation, I contented myself with the hope that some day I would meet the Poet later at a smaller gathering.

## CHAPTER XVII

### I MEET THE POET

I USED to visit a small Indian boy of a friendly family two or three times a week to brush up his English. It was in my talks with this little boy that I had heard Indian poetry. Sunday, May 7, 1938 is a date I shall not forget. Having the evening free I decided to take my young pupil to the cinema. Since he was alone he accepted the offer gratefully. On getting back we had just finished having a snack with our chairs drawn up to the fire, and we were both so engrossed in our conversation that we did not at first hear the arrival of people in the next room, until I was suddenly struck by the sound of laughter. Thinking it to be unusual, I asked the boy who was in the next room. He returned some minutes later, saying, "My father has returned home and with him is Hafeez Sahib, the Poet."

Although it was long past my time for leaving, I inwardly thought that Fate had made this the opportunity for me to meet the Poet.

On being introduced to Hafeez I looked at him blankly, even stupidly ; for, before me stood a man quite different from what I had expected him to be. My mind's eye had drawn quite a different portrait of him. His imaginative picture before me was that of an elderly man, small, well-built, hair grey at the temples, and possessing a long flowing beard which prevented the onlookers from noticing his clear-cut features.

But quite contrary to my expectations, there before me sat a man, young and not old, about forty, I thought. Rather thin, and clad in rather a large modern coat. I looked for the turban, the popular head-dress of the Indians, but instead I found a grey fur cap, and when he took it off I noticed that his hair was black though a good deal was missing from the top. He smiled with a certain reserve which revealed mingled expressions of cynicism and humour.

In my momentary glance of him I made a



quick psychological survey of his temper and feelings. It convinced me that he had shouldered a great burden and faced adversity in life. I looked at him with some curiosity and the very look of him robbed me of my speech. I wanted to speak and there were in fact many things to talk about his work which had interested me, but my mental process of judging him engrossed me so deeply that I found myself altogether lost in it. I was experiencing some strong and strange inner force which seemed to have numbed all my desire for conversation. Perfect silence prevailed for some moments. It was broken by the child who told the Poet of my desire to hear "Jaag Soz-i-Ishq Jaag" from him. I noticed the look of surprise in the Poet's eyes. Instead of complying with the child's request he asked me to recite a poem in my mother tongue for he had been told by the host that I was British by birth and Lithuanian by extraction.

It was now my turn to look surprised. I was feeling nonplussed by this sudden desire of the Poet and since my desire to hear him



reciting was so keen, I acceded to his request. I managed to do it with great nervousness, and in return Hafeez also recited "Jaag Soz-i-Ishq Jaag".

I shall never forget that recitation. The composition was like that of the old English ballads and sounded every bit as beautiful, if not more. The rhythm was sad and pleading, the tones of the Poet's voice were soft and melodious. I closed my eyes for a moment and was carried away, off the face of the earth, almost lost in the world of imagination! No voice, save that of the Poet's, could be heard; the inspiration was great and strong. I had never before heard such a recitation.

No translation can convey the music of the original and the magic of his voice but the all moving thought is there. Here are a few stanzas.

Awake, O Burning Passion of Love.

Awake, O Burning Passion of Love.

Awake, O God of Love,

Arouse new storms of emotion.

My heart is choked :

Rekindle new longings.

Cold is the fire within me,

Awake, O Burning Passion of Love.  
Awake, O Burning Passion of Love.

Awake.....

When you closed your eyes  
Sleep overtook the Universe.  
The day of self-conceited  
Beauty turned into Night.  
The bridal garment of youth itself faded.  
Awake, O Burning Passion of Love.

Awake.....

O Minstrel of Youth  
Awake from your slumber.  
Heart-broken is the harp  
And has been for long.  
Dead are the old songs—  
Awake, O Burning Passion of Love.

Awake.....

When you open your eyes and give one look  
All desires awaken  
Lovers' sighs and laments take birth  
Music and merriment come into being.  
The strains of sorrow and joy  
Mingle in one song.  
Awake, O Burning Passion of Love.

Awake.....

Again with the same swing  
Cupid lifts his bow

The voice of restraint shouts caution, in vain—  
Good fortune smiles on all lovers' hearts.

Awake, O Burning Passion of Love.

Awake, O Burning Passion of Love.

When Hafeez ended his poem he was asked by the host to recite again a second one, and I listened with an increased interest and attention, but the music of "Jaag Soz-i-Ishq Jaag" was still echoing in my ears. I said to the Poet when he finished reciting, "Mr. Hafeez, no matter what poem you may recite, none will sound to me as beautiful as "Jaag Soz-i-Ishq Jaag" and though I do not read or speak your language, I understand the poem somehow, I can also find the poem in your book." Hafeez looked at me for a moment as if trying to see how I could possibly understand the beauty of the poem since I neither spoke nor understood his language. He smiled and said in very broken English, "Dear Miss, I have written many beautiful pieces like that." So ended my first meeting with this poet of India!

The next day dawned with the poem still fresh in my mind. I caught myself humming

the pieces I remembered. I wanted to learn and recite it just as the Poet did. Inwardly I was determined that I would. Soon after, the Poet's crowded programme began, and he was kept very busy reciting at meetings. I did not see or hear of him again for two full weeks.

He never had time to himself, every minute was occupied at meetings, luncheons, teas and dinners. The meetings which he attended were held at different hotels and restaurants. So many people gathered to hear his recitations, that many times it was difficult to accommodate them all. After his recitations the public would gather round him embracing and patting him in the true oriental style and saying "Wonderful, very good, Hafeez, may you live long."

What made these meetings so tiring for him were the demands for more and more by the listeners. Naturally an hour or more of this every day, for weeks, would prove tiring to any man. Being wrapped in poetic emotions he began to show signs of nervousness, through sheer fatigue. His programme was not one which promised him rest.



Throughout the day Hafeez used to study for his *Shahnama* and write. Two or three days a week he was attending a school for English. For him indeed there was no rest.

In going out to luncheons and dinners he was fulfilling the wishes of his hosts and giving pleasure to the guests. But he always arrived home very late, and the next day began with him tired and yet full of engagements.

One day when he was free, he accepted an invitation to join the boy and myself at tea. From his very halting English I gathered that he was exhausted and ill. His drawn and tired face with eyes red and sleepy, evoked my sympathy. The picture before me was that of a helpless fatigued man, a man whose time was spent only in public. It was with great difficulty that he could express himself. Mostly he found it comfortable to talk with the motions of his hands, every minute or so saying "Excuse me, Miss, I cannot speak your language," this being the only sentence he spoke fluently. Because of this language difficulty he found great trouble in going about



London. On one occasion he was invited to a dinner. The appointed time was 7 P.M. After following many directions and going off many routes he arrived at 11 P.M. The suggestion that he should call in when the boy was having a lesson from me trusting that that would improve his English, Hafeez gratefully accepted.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### EYES ON ENGLAND

**H**AFAEEZ left that evening feeling sad, lonely and tired in a strange country. I saw him in the midst of men and women with a helpless look in his eyes. His body was bent with strain. I disliked myself at that moment, for I too was like many of the desirous public who were like ants running for a lump of sugar. Why did all clamour so much for a man who was tired after going through the strain of writing the poems we liked so well? It seems to be the common fate of all noted in the public eye. It is true, our smiles of appreciation and the persistent demands to hear more and more might give some satisfaction to him, but still he needed rest even to meet those demands.

In the midst of all this his keenness to learn English remained unabated. Hafeez called twice to take a lesson but he found it

difficult to follow it as the boy pupil was more advanced than him ! He then preferred to take lessons all by himself. I found he had great difficulty in following straightforward grammar and mixed his past and present tenses. It amused me immensely that a man who was such a great *litterateur* in one language, was worse than a school boy in another. His vocabulary also was very poor. But he had the desire to make out the exact spirit of the words in the English language. So I decided that the best way was to draw him into conversation and encourage him to talk about his works and life. This method proved congenial to Hafeez and I heard his remarkable life story from him.

The Poet's ambition as I came to know in these talks was to work for all humanity. This he has been doing constantly. Although he was an Indian, through his writings he said "I belong not only to India but to the whole world." He does not believe in dividing human beings on the basis of colour.

He is a devout believer in God. God is his confidant and gives him strength and

inspiration in all his undertakings. I found the Poet a great lover of children. He has written many special poems for them. In writing these he forgets completely his own age and feels himself to be a child. His songs and poems are very entertaining and are of sound educative value. Hafeez has written poems for girls between the ages of ten and fifteen which also help to create a new outlook on life. It was from him that I first came to understand that the schools in India for children were far different from those in England. Many go through life uneducated as their parents have not the means to send them to high schools and universities. The Poet realizes this and attempts in his poems to help them all to make up for the lack of sufficient arrangements made for the necessary education of the coming generation.

Then again the Poet is sadly conscious of the position of women in India to-day. He believes that God made woman naturally beautiful. She possesses chastity, modesty, and a soul ; these are her possessions and she should put them to the best purpose.

Woman, in his philosophy, is greater than man, for it is she who is responsible for the nation and the future generations. All this Hafeez points out in his books for women.

When speaking of his own sex I was surprised to hear a man talking with such hate and vehemence. I could hardly believe that my ears were hearing correctly. He said "Men pluck these flowers, women, and then throw them away to die." I found that his inner feelings were most sympathetic towards women. His broad way of looking at things makes him believe that all men are equal all the world over. There is no difference between nation and nation and different standards of life cannot divide the humanity in man.

Man should prevent, and not wage, war. There is only one thing in this world to fight against and that is evil. These are the humane foundations on which stands the structure of his lofty thoughts.

He has a natural simplicity about him. Although he has reached the height of his fame, he is still a shy, reserved and an unspoilt man who looks upon those less



fortunate than himself with kindness and often with pain.

One morning, when I called on the Poet to give him his English lesson, I was shocked to find him very ill and alone. He had attended a meeting the previous evening held at 8, Hyde Park Gate, London, S.W.7. Unfortunately shortly after his recital he became ill and fainted and had to be taken home by Sir Abdul Qadir.

Hafeez had, from the day he set foot in England, done nothing but recite poems and attend meetings and now he decided to "cry halt" and found it necessary to run away from the public.

"Even in England I am not free. I am tired and worried and I must go away into the country or else I shall break down, again." Some weeks later, he managed to get a bungalow in Jaywick, Clacton-on-Sea. There he stayed for four weeks.

In the refreshing isolation of this seaside resort he felt inspired and finished the first thousand verses of the third volume of *Shahnama*. Reluctantly, the Poet came back to London and luckily for him very

few people knew of his return and he was glad to spend some weeks undisturbed.

King George VI and Queen Elizabeth of England visited France in July, 1938. Sir Abdul Qadir had arranged to spend a month in France, during the same time. Sir Abdul invited Hafeez to join him, but, after eleven days in France, he returned to London feeling sick and disgusted with the French ways of life. On getting back to London the Poet found himself thinking of his return to India to fulfil his engagement at the Nawab of Bahawalpur's court. He fixed his date of departure for September 10, 1938.

A week before his leaving, Sir Abdul Qadir gave an "At-Home" to bid farewell to Hafeez. The meeting was held at the Overseas League Hall, St. James Street where I had the pleasure of being the guest of the chief guest. The room was medium sized, unusually designed and beautifully decorated. As soon as Hafeez entered, guests came forward to greet him. Many expressing their surprise at his leaving them so suddenly. It was impossible to find him in the midst of all his admirers. The room was a buzz of

conversation. After tea the guests settled down and Hafeez recited his newly composed poem "The World of the West." "*Afrang-ki-Dunya*," in which he described his impressions of the Western civilization. Needless to say, it was immensely enjoyed. The continuous clapping, accompanied by the shouts of very good, wonderful, *wah, wah* coming from the listeners made the occasion very exciting. The spirit of this poem made a deep impression upon me.

Sir Abdul Qadir later read out the translation in English.

Here are some of the extracts :—

### THE WORLD OF THE WEST

It is a kaleidoscopic Talisman—this world of the  
“ Afrangi ”  
 Destiny has shown me a glimpse of its modernity,  
 A world of dance and merriment, of sweet tunes and  
melody,  
 Of bustle and panic, of disturbances and war,  
 A paradise, yet not without fear,  
 If not quite real, still not all imaginary.

\* \* \*

I see the horizon thick with clouds of trouble,  
 Days and nights of anxiety, mornings and evenings  
full of concern,

I see the art of the destruction of Nations—  
 It is painful to watch, but you have to see it,  
 It is impossible to describe all that there is to see,  
 My eyes cannot discharge the function of the tongue.

\* \* \*

Not earth alone but fire, water and air as well,  
 Appear to be subjugated by man, with chains on  
their feet.

There is an earthquake under the ground as well as  
on the sky.

The Angels look upon it with amazement and God  
Himself is its Witness.

Breaches have been made in the walls of eternity,  
 And Sway over Death itself is within the grasp of man.

\* \* \*

It is not for me, a poet, to philosophise,  
 The weight of solid results presses heavily on my mind,  
 In the civilisation of man, be it new or old,  
 What I look for is 'beauty' and the beauty of the  
essence of things.

I have no enmity with the children of God—  
 That is to say, in my world there is no 'foreigner'.

\* \* \*

Now that the Sun is shedding its splendour on the  
West,

For some time the East has to suffer in darkness,  
 The dawn will come there, when this night passes,  
 Over these revolutions of time, neither you nor I  
have control.

The changes of night and day and the month and  
the year will continue.



These turns will last as long as the Heavenly orbs  
revolve.

\* \* \*

The East is not devoid of learning and excellence,  
There was a time when the West begged at its door  
for light.

However the West has developed one peculiarity,  
With which the efforts of the East have not been  
able to compete—

That peculiarity is its pride in the beauty of women,  
This feature holds my East in fascination.

\* \* \*

The market owes its activity to her,  
The shops are attractive as she is there,  
Bargains and business are brisk through her power,  
Pockets jingle with coins of gold, for her to hear.  
Advertisements at the turning of every lane point  
to her  
And on every wall her portrait is visible.

\* \* \*

The colour of the wine and the cup in wine-shops is  
borrowed from her

The red wine is but a reflection of her blood,  
On the canvass of the picture you see her work,  
In the pages of the newspapers you find her name—  
She is in accord with the harp of Statecraft,  
This is a secret which is seldom revealed.

\* \* \*

I was struck with wonder when I saw the sea-side  
The grains of sand had become the stars of the sky of  
beauty—



Blazing lights—like the glare of a bare sword in the  
Sun,  
 The dance, the song, the fun and the frolic,  
 Like waves of quicksilver trembling in water,  
 Were the waves of the world-brightening Sun in the Sea.

\*                      \*                      \*

The West is, in reality, under the rule of the beautiful,  
 The Black and the White are under their yoke,  
 The destruction of others is for their benefit,  
 The armies and the soldiers are for their sake—  
 If nations are faced with guns—O, Beauty  
 It is to provide comforts for thee.

The meeting then came to a close ; but not without good-byes, congratulations, and much photo-taking. The Poet's friends expressed their desire to see him once again in England. Hafeez also expressed his intention to visit England again 'soon'. I was very sorry about the Poet's departure but felt very proud of the fact that it was I who had helped him to speak and write a little English, although teaching him was a difficult task at first as both of us were ignorant of each other's language. It was very amusing hunting up many words from the English and Urdu dictionaries.

The day Hafeez left England, it was a cold English September morning. Sir Abdul Qadir and some other Indian gentlemen were at the station to say good-bye to him. Sir Abdul looked a little sad, for he would miss the Poet's daily visits. The same signs of depression and parting sorrow were visible on the Poet's face. It was a tense moment. And in a fit of distress he said, "Now, I am anxious to start," to which Sir Abdul Qadir remarked "That is the Poet's impatience in you."

At last the train steamed off carrying him back to his work and his country. I too felt sad.

## CHAPTER XIX

### EPIC OF ISLAM

**I**T is *Shahnama-i-Islam* which has won for Hafeez the title of "Firdausi of Islam." This is a great and distinguished work to which he had dedicated his life. No story of Hafeez's life can be complete without a review of it.

I have seen Hafeez recite *Shahnama* to the people. I have seen their faces flushed with emotion. Tears of pride fill their eyes. The glory of their past floats before them like a cloud as the melodious voice of Hafeez sways them. The effect of this recitation on the Musalmans is beyond description.

*Shahnama-i-Islam* is an epic poem containing the history of Islam. It begins with the praise of God, and the Holy Prophet. In a very unassuming way Hafeez tells of what moved him to undertake this great work.

Deadness of spirit prevails over the Muslims every-  
where ;  
And the stillness of death enshrouds them.

Once again I wish to warm their blood ;  
And pierce their hearts with the fiery darts of poetry.

And tell them such thrilling bold stirring stories ;  
As will have the support of both reason and history.

Firdausi revived a forgotten Iran  
If God help me I wish to revive Faith in Islam.

With such sweeping idealism, Hafeez  
couples the consciousness of his own limita-  
tions as a man of the world and therein lies  
his strength.

Referring to Firdausi of immortal fame, in  
all humility he says :—

Far be it from me to claim equality with him  
My imagination is limited, my language imperfect.

I am a frail, humble, ignorant, helpless person.  
I am a dwelling where grief and sorrows live.

After recounting the difficulties hindering  
the accomplishment of his work he makes a  
feeling reference to his visits to the forgotten  
tomb of the Slave Emperor.

In one of the side streets of Lahore's most

crowded highway Anarkali, unknown even to the thronging crowds of the Punjab's capital is situated this tomb, where lies buried Kutbuddin Aibuk, one of the most romantic figures of mediæval India. He was the first Muslim king to rule this country.

Hafeez has expressed his feelings in a most sensitive way in describing this tomb. When he says :—

He, with whose name the word slavery itself feels  
exalted.

And the imagination of Prophets extends to the  
heights of heaven itself.

His tomb today, is too obscure even for a rainy cloud  
to find.

Monsoon clouds come tearful but cannot shed their  
sorrow.

Moved by such sentiments Hafeez echoes the call of his conscience :—

You can once again give the message of freedom to  
the oppressed

You can once again make live noble deeds with your  
pen.

Islam which conferred independence on the oppressed  
Islam which brought brotherhood in place of  
exploitation.



Islam which bestowed kingship even on slaves  
That Islam can even today revive its noble deeds.

Thus was inspired the chief work of  
Hafeez's life.

The great story begins with the birth of  
Adam and his expulsion from Heaven.  
There are gems of poetry in these three  
volumes. Just a few pieces have been  
selected to illustrate the high points of the  
Poet's art and depth of the spirit which  
shines through these works.

The story of Abraham, his second marriage  
to the daughter of Pharaoh of Egypt,  
the birth of Ismael and the journey to the  
sunburnt, sand-scorched desert. Hafeez  
describes in his own inimitable way :—

The caravan of God which consisted of three persons ;  
Which was one day destined to become exalted on this  
earth and heaven ;

Was moving across the heart of a sun-scorched  
desert.

A Desert where man prefers death to life ;

A Desert whose heart is the habitat of the fire-like  
rays of the sun ;

A Desert whose sands since the beginning of time are  
longing to see the face of water.

The gusts of sand storms were here in plenty,  
It was a valley so full of horrors that even terror  
itself felt terrified.

But this valley was unique in the world.  
It was one day to become the centre of true religion.  
Here there was no greenery, no water, no shade ;  
It was in search of this valley that Abraham had come.  
In the morning Abraham prayed for peace of mind ;  
And strength for submission to His will.

“ O Lord my action is in obedience to your order ;  
So I settle my wife and child here. ”

There was nothing all around but desert and cliffs ;  
Only two souls, Hajira and the child.

Without food and water only the confidence in God  
was their sustenance

When heat reached burning point, death began to  
threaten.

At the sight of her child, rolling about in pain her  
heart was torn ;

Tears of despair bore testimony to the rarity of  
water.

That was the hour of trial like the day of  
resurrection ;

Here and there she went, with blistered feet, her eyes  
looking for water and her heart with her child.

On reaching nearer she saw Gabriel with wings open,  
And Ismael under the shade sucking his thumb.

Now she was spell-bound at the scene before her ;  
A spring was flowing by the side of Ismael's feet.

Where in helplessness the child had rubbed his heels ;  
There had suddenly appeared a spring of cold sweet  
water.

This spring of fresh sweet water "Zam Zam" is still flowing in the vicinity of Mecca and draws homage from the Musalmans all the world over. This was the first miracle of the baby who one day was to guide the destinies of the community as a prophet.

The Poet, with his unique command of expression then goes on to describe the history of the ancient period of Islam and narrates the birth of the Prophet Mohammad as a link in the line of all the previous prophets. With great art he mirrors the political, social and religious conditions prevailing at that time.

He depicts vividly the political disintegration, social evils, ignoble customs, the butchering of new-born daughters and the dark practices among the ancient Arabs.



It was all providential that this was to take place  
under the skies ;  
Because one day they were to be used as an offering  
for the Emperor of the Universe.

Hafeez's deep, moving and unmeasurable  
love for the Prophet is reflected once again  
with the same force of imagination and  
emotion in the way in which he interprets  
the real significance of the Prophet's message  
to the whole world.

Congratulations to those who suffer oppression ;  
And who are desolate and deprived of shelter.

Blessings be on the sorrow-deepening glances of the  
widows ;  
Effect has now been introduced into their pitiable  
sighs and lamentations.

Congratulations to the aged, the down-trodden and  
the castaways of fate.  
The orphans, the slaves and the poor.

Congratulations to those who stumble on every step ;  
And to those who are aimlessly wandering in the  
desert of want.

In every nook and corner of the world convey the good  
tidings to the oppressed ;  
No more will there be the high-handedness of self-  
seeking might, no more.



The destined hour approached and it diminished the  
power of the upholders of falsehood ;  
Darkness was lighted and the clouds of dark sin  
dispersed at last.

Rejoice, for the era of happiness and comfort has  
come.

In the shape of perpetual peace Islam has come.

Rejoice, for the last of the prophets has arrived ;  
The great benefactor of the universe has come.

From the early days of the Prophet's childhood the Poet takes us to the age when Mohammad declared himself the prophet of his age. This declaration of his faith was a death-knell to the prevailing civilization of idol-worship. The Quresh who were in power opposed him and put shameless obstacles in his way. Only his noble wife Khadija among women, Ali among the younger generation, Abu Bakar Siddique among the elders, and Zaid among the slaves came out first among those who acknowledged Mohammad as a true messenger of God, whose arrival was prophesied in all the previous holy books revealed to Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and other

prophets of God. This declaration stirred the revolution in Mecca to its depths. The governing families took up arms against the Prophet. This part of the Prophet's life has been portrayed by the Poet with great force.

The Poet in the same grand style depicts the molestation of the Holy Prophet and his devout followers by the ruling clan of Quresh which forced on the Prophet his flight to Medina. Here ends the first volume.

Hafeez published the second volume of *Shahnama* in 1933 which contains more than one thousand couplets. In this volume he gives vivid and thrilling description of the first open war waged by the Quresh of Mecca against the Holy Prophet and his followers who had taken refuge in Medina. This battle is called the "Battle of Badar" as it was fought just near the village Badar.

In this historic battle the Musalmans were only 313 and the opponents consisted of more than one thousand armed soldiers.

But the faith-inspired Musalmans stood the day and the battle was won.

The conspicuous feature of this volume is the exposition of the true spirit of "Jihad" "War of Religion," which the Prophet himself from time to time expounded to his sincere followers who were ready to sacrifice their precious lives in the cause of Islam. The Holy Prophet said, in the words of the Poet :

The basic principle of Islam stands inviolable  
No relationship whatsoever can be set up with the  
enemies of the Truth.

It was with the sublime teachings of Islam  
That human hearts broke the idols of superstitions.

If the father was found on the side of the aggressors  
True faith inspired the son to thrust the first sword  
at him.

And if the son was found hostile to the faith of "the  
beloved of God"  
The sword of the father relished the blood of the son.

The bond of God's love severed all customary ties and  
connections  
The lancets' point pierced the venom-filled blisters.

Even the stream of mother's milk did not bar the  
way of Truth  
And boldly did a brother go forth to cut off the head  
of his brother.

Those desirous of serving the will of God  
Were not governed by the ties of blood.

One who revolts against Truth is the enemy of man  
And the enemy of man is a veritable enemy of the  
Musalmans.

Any leniency for a father, son or brother who  
militates against true religion  
Is an open insult to the true law.

Should a person armed attack the believers  
What alternative is there but to kill him in self-  
defence ?

This righteous principle is the basis of unity in the  
community  
And the maintenance of the community is the bed-  
rock of true faith.

When the bond of love is tied with the Almighty  
Then man is detached from earthly pursuits.

Their love for their fellow beings is in the name of God  
And in the name of God is their war against the  
unjust.

In His name they fight and make peace  
They live and die for the sake of Him alone.

They are not tempted by wealth nor are they carried  
away by glamour  
They make friends only with those who love God.

They care not for High Birth or rank  
Their friendships are only in the service of the  
Almighty.

The third volume relates the grim battle of Uhah in which the Musalmans were defeated. In this very battle the Prophet himself was attacked by the opponents and was seriously injured. This led to the rumour of the Prophet's death which disheartened the Musalmans who lost the battle. The details are a maze of complicated historical events. But in dealing with these facts, Hafeez is so inspired and clear as if some inner force urged his pen in making history into poetry.

What he writes on slavery has a message not to the Musalmans alone but to peoples of all lands and all climes in all ages. And herein lies the universal appeal of Hafeez's poetry and the depth of his human ap-



proach to the problems of life and society  
for which his heart sings.

### BONDAGE

Slavery kills the sentiment of honour  
It deadens the courage to bear hardship.

Self-respect loses its meaning for a slave  
With the collar of contempt round his neck he feels  
happy.

Slavery frightens man away from the heights of as-  
pirations  
It teaches him the art of crawling on his belly.

Slaves see danger in every thing bold  
Fear governs them in peace, and flight guides them  
in war.

Slaves have not the stamp of firmness on their will  
Their hearts are not drawn to the charms of stead-  
fastness.

Slavery robs man of his humanity  
Action is there but without the beauty of conviction.

Slavery murders true values and is the enemy of  
thought  
It is opposed to self-realisation and is hostile to  
God's worship.

Slavery is devoid of wisdom and is incapable of true  
love

It courts ease and seeks satisfaction in lust.

In the battle of life trembling at the enemy's sword  
Slaves cut their throats with their own hands.

Their eyes see not beyond the realm of doubt  
And are curtained from Reality.

Slavery with its own hands forges its charms  
And thus bedecked makes merry.

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